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THE CONGO RESCUE MISSION OF NOVEMBER 1964

8 April 1965

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PREFACE

This study presents an account of U.S. decision making during the Congo rescue mission crisis (Operation DRAGON ROUGE) of November 1964. The study is one of a series prepared by WSEG in response to DJSM 1111-61 of 14 September 1961 and other JCS authorizations, in accordance with which WSEG has been conducting studies of command problems and procedures and decision making in a series of recent critical incidents. The overall purpose of these studies is to provide empirical data concerning the operation of the national military command structure in actual crisis situations, in order to aid in the development of improved command and control systems.

This basic paper covers the course of events with a focus on decision making. A detailed chronology of the crisis is presented in an appendix. Problems of communications and NMCC operations in support of the operation are covered in another appendix.

The overall study is based upon an analysis of the message traffic, logs, recorded telephone traffic and other JCS papers and records available in J-3, as well as the files of the Congo Working Group in the Department of State. Key military and State Department personnel involved in the episode have been interviewed and they provided indispensable information. There was unfortunately no record kept of the discussions at the numerous State/Defense group meetings in which U.S. action was determined, since apparently neither State nor military participants kept minutes of the meetings. However, the general tenor of the meetings and the topics discussed are known sufficiently for the overall purposes of this study.

[REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION

On 30 June 1960 the former Belgian Congo became the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A huge country of 909,000 square miles, as large as all Western Europe, and fifteen million inhabitants, the Congo has known nothing but turmoil and upheaval since the day it achieved independence. The new country has been riven by political disorder and civil disobedience, based primarily upon tribal dissensions. Rioting which grew out of the Independence Day celebrations led to mutiny in the Congolese Army on 6 July 1960. From this unfortunate occurrence has flowed four and a half years of anarchy, since the cracking of the one disciplined element in Congolese society immediately inspired every sort of disparate and divisive element to break loose.

The return of Belgian troops immediately after the Army revolt to protect European civilians brought about a U.N. intervention which was to last more than three years. The U.N. forces attempted to maintain law and order and to support the legal government of the Congo against the several separatist movements in the provinces. The most enduring of these was in Katanga where the Premier, Moise Tshombe, successfully resisted U.N. pressure and ultimately military action before yielding under attack in January 1963. While Katanga thereafter was controlled by the Government in Leopoldville, acts of violence continued throughout the country, and the Central Government's control remained precarious and essentially ineffective.

Consequently in January 1964 Tshombe, as the strongest political figure, was brought back from exile to become the Premier of the Congo. U.N. forces which had been gradually

[REDACTED]

reduced were soon thereafter completely withdrawn. However, Tshombe was immediately faced with the same problems that had afflicted his predecessors. In September 1963 a group of disgruntled former Central Government officials, who had fled Leopoldville to neighboring Brazzaville to escape arrest, formed the Committee of National Liberation. This was to be the main root of the new rebel movement. With the encouragement, guidance, and some financial support from Bloc countries with embassies in Brazzaville and Bujumbura, Burundi, the Committee began to exploit the continuous anarchism in the northeast portion of the Congo. There operated in this region loosely organized gangs which attacked all forms of authority - political, military, and religious.

As dissidence succeeded, so it spread, aided by the ineffective performance of the Congolese Army units sent against it. Wild routs and mass desertions of Congo Army units provided the dissidents, now a growing insurgent movement, with weapons and even personnel. What had been vandalism and gang harassment had developed by May 1964 into a major threat to the Government's control of the northeast provinces. Disintegration of Government resistance led to the capture by rebel bands of Stanleyville, capital of Haut Congo Province, on August 5.

While insurgency remained essentially what it had been for years, a fantastic blend of vandalism, banditry, and inter-tribal strife, a new element became increasingly apparent. This was intervention from outside in the form of growing aid to the rebels. The chief source was Communist China, but other African states, in an effort to undermine the unpopular Tshombe, were also suspected of assisting the rebel movement.

[REDACTED]

Throughout these years the U.S. had played a very circumspect role in Congo affairs. During the entire period of operations of the U.N. Military Command, the U.S. had provided logistic support, and had worked to strengthen the Central Government against the separatist provinces. The U.S. had, in fact, been a mainspring of opposition to Tshombe when he ruled Katanga and was responsible in large part for his ultimate defeat. Nevertheless, the U.S. had shown no inclination to become deeply involved in Congolese affairs. It was felt that there were no vital national interests at stake and that interference in Congo affairs could only exacerbate U.S. relations with the new nations of Africa.

The original disturbances of 1960 had led to a mass evacuation of non-Congolese from some parts of the country, but in the intervening years many of these had returned and were conducting their business all through the Congo. While Belgians remained the largest single non Congolese community, there were many thousands of others, representing a score of nationalities. Despite the occasional killing or mistreatment of non-Congolese by various and sundry dissident movements, the non-Congolese as a group had not been directly attacked. The new rebel movement was to change this situation. They apparently decided to begin a policy of seizing non-Congolese in rebel-held areas as hostages, to use them as a political tool against the Congolese Government. From the sparse information getting out of rebel territory, it soon became apparent that hostages were being subjected to harsh treatment.

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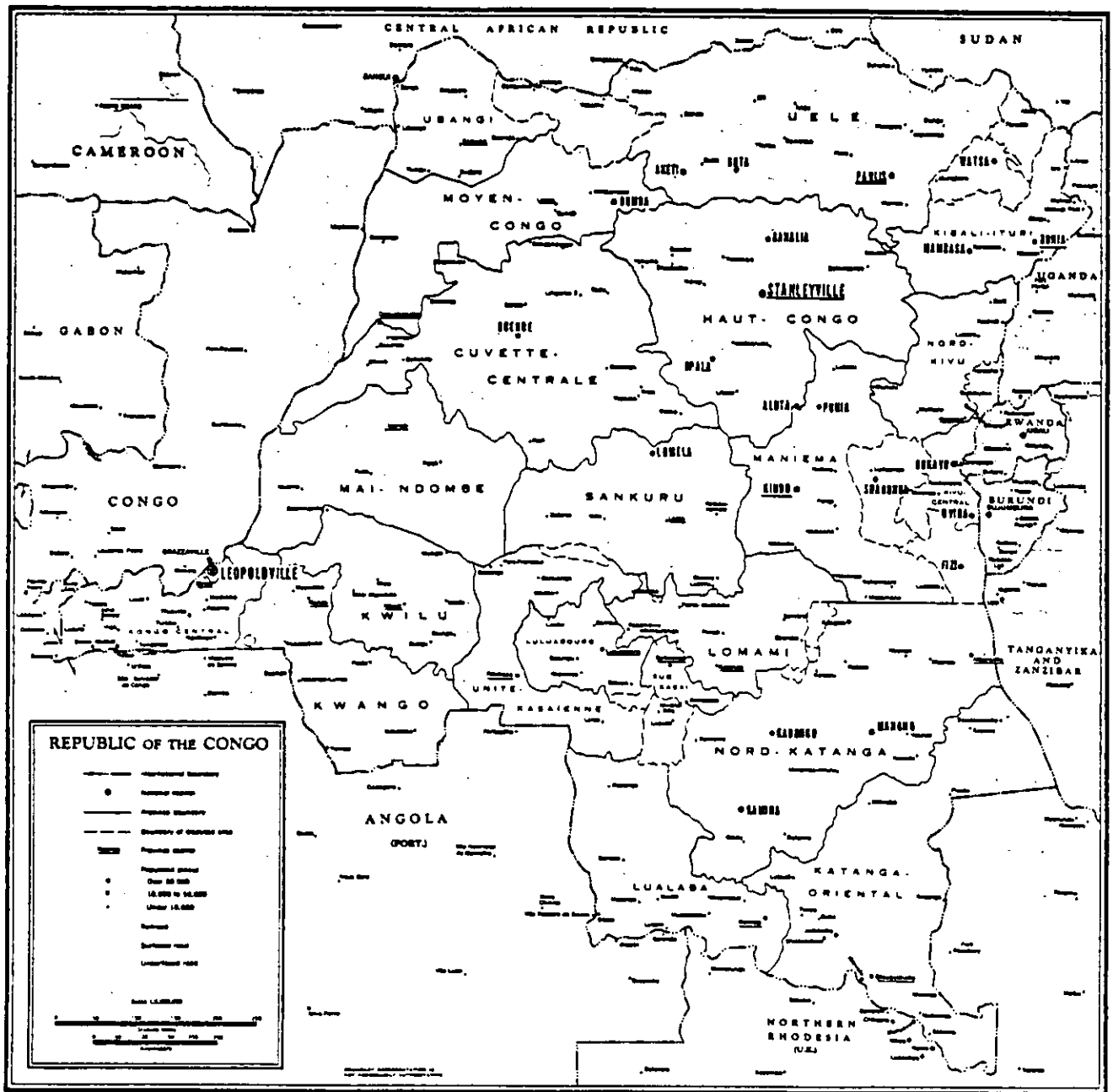


FIGURE 1. Map of Congo

LEGEND

1st PHASE 14 Nov. '64
2nd PHASE
3rd PHASE

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

— International Boundary
• National Capital
— Provincial Boundary
--- Boundary of Reported Area
— Province Capital
• Provincial Center
• Town 50,000
• Town 10,000 to 50,000
• Town 10,000
— Railway
— Highway
— Unimproved Road

Scale 1:500,000

0 10 20 30 40 50 Kilometers

0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

Map of the Republic of the Congo showing military operations in November 1964. The map includes a legend for three phases of operations: 1st Phase (14 Nov. '64), 2nd Phase, and 3rd Phase. It also includes a scale bar and a list of symbols for various locations and features.

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I. EARLY INVOLVEMENT AND PLANNING

The course of events which led to the American involvement in the Congo rescue operation began with the fall of Stanleyville, 775 miles northeast of Leopoldville, to the rebels during the first week of August. With the fall of this major city, twenty-five Americans, including five members of the U.S. Consulate, along with a sizeable non-Congolese community, estimated as 800 to 2,000 in number, fell into rebel hands.

A. JOINT TASK FORCE LEOPOLDVILLE

The first U.S. response to the situation was based not only upon fear for the safety of the captured Americans but also upon the need to provide immediate support to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (GDRC). Premier Tshombe's Armee Nationale du Congo (ANC) forces seemed unable to hold the rebel advance, so an extremely limited commitment was decided upon by the U.S. to help the regime.

This commitment was through the establishment of Joint Task Force Leopoldville under the control of USCINCSSTRIKE/CINCEAFSA. On August 11, four C-130s left MacDill Air Force Base for Leopoldville with a platoon of paratroops aboard. CINCSTRIKE provided the JTF headquarters and the paratroops and aircraft, while CINCEUR sent four helicopters and a group of communications specialists. The total JTF force thus was approximately 150 people with eight aircraft. The mission of this force was to be prepared for any possible evacuation of non-Congolese and to aid in the movement of supplies and troops of the ANC. In addition, there were within the MAAG a small number of U.S. technical training teams provided under MAP, starting the previous spring.

[REDACTED]

The organizational arrangements for the JTF were unique for a military force. The JTF was under operational control of CINCSTRIKE, but worked under the direction of the Ambassador in Leopoldville, G.M. Godley. As long as missions he assigned were within the broad terms of reference approved by CINCSTRIKE, the missions could be carried out without going to STRIKE for approval.

Associated with JTF Leopoldville was the Commander U.S. Military Mission (COMISH) whose group worked directly for the Ambassador as part of the country team, under the auspices of CINCSTRIKE. COMISH and JTF Leo (Leopoldville is customarily referred to as Leo and shall be in this study) were essentially parallel commands. Once the rescue mission preparations began, COMISH was put under control of the JTF.

While the primary mission of the JTF was possible evacuation of non-Congolese, it was the secondary mission of providing logistic support to the ANC which occupied its efforts between August and November. Daily meetings of the Commander JTF, COMISH, [REDACTED] Ambassador Godley evaluated and approved missions.

On arrival in Leopoldville, the JTF had found the city nervous, the fear of a rebel-sponsored uprising in the city being very prevalent. Plans were hastily worked out to pick up scattered Americans in this event. At the same time a rough plan was devised to try to rescue the Americans trapped in Stanleyville. A C-47 plane was moved up country toward Stanleyville as far as Lisale but got no further, and plans remained amorphous.

[REDACTED]

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While the psychological impact of these aircraft upon the rebels was recognized by all concerned, the actual combat performance was apparently very poor in most cases. The logistic support of the aircraft was poor, so that the rate of aircraft out of commission was usually 50 percent. The quality of the pilots also apparently left much to be desired. However, in October the performance did begin to improve, probably due to the arrival of a U.S. Navy pilot on the COMISH staff, [REDACTED]

B. FIRST PLANNING STAGE

The success of the rebel movement hit its peak in late August and early September with the threatened capture of the major city of Bukavu, following the seizure of Stanleyville. The ANC shortly thereafter launched a general counterattack and never again allowed the rebels the opportunity for an offensive. As a result the Congo situation tended to cool down for the next five weeks.

The concern generated over the possible fall of Bukavu, however, initiated the first U.S. planning phase for rescue plans for the Stanleyville hostages.

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On September 4, members of the State Department's Congo Working Group (an interdepartmental standing committee, chaired by State) visited the JCS for a briefing on plans for the rescue of the Stanleyville American hostages. They were surprised to find that no such specific plans existed. The only contingency plan in existence was one concerned with the Congo as a whole and having as its specific objective the establishment of a secure base in the vicinity of Leopoldville for the conduct of subsequent operations as required. As a consequence of the visit, Deputy Secretary of Defense Vance, on that same day, sent a memorandum to the CJCS informing him that the State Department had requested that the DOD evaluate the problem of extricating the estimated 25 Americans in Stanleyville and then recommend possible military courses of action. Vance asked for the views of the JCS in regard to an appropriate military course of action, using minimum force to extricate:

a. The five official Americans and others whose exact location within Stanleyville was known; or

b. The whole group of Americans.

In the first case the JCS were asked also to consider a covert use of military forces.

The evaluation, the memorandum emphasized, must include the probability of getting the hostages out unharmed since any rescue operation would be worse than just useless if this condition were not fulfilled.

On the same day the JCS forwarded the State Department's request to CINCSRIKE, requesting him to consider the courses of action, each using the very minimum force, which had been outlined in the Vance memorandum. CINCSRIKE was told to have a concept of operations in the hands of the JCS no later than 8 September.

[REDACTED]

A concept of operations was duly developed by CINCSTRIKE and delivered to the JCS in a six-part message on 7 September. It outlined three overt possibilities (ALPHA, BRAVO, and CHARLIE) and one covert operation. CINCSTRIKE recommended that the JCS approve a broad course of action envisioning the initial effort being conducted by covert means with a backup overt force ready for employment on order should the covert operation fail. CINCSTRIKE further suggested that the best course of action would be the capture of Stanleyville and the evacuation of all non-Congolese. This suggestion was the forerunner of the ultimate DRAGON ROUGE operation.

The JCS evaluated the CINCSTRIKE concept of operations and decided that the covert plan offered the best chance of success. On 11 September they approved a suggested covert operation by 100 men with an overt backup of two companies in an airborne assault.

The CJCS transmitted the views of the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on 12 September. He laid out the two courses of action and the JCS evaluation of each, but stated that both the overt and covert courses might be objected to by Belgium for fear of rebel reprisals to remaining non-Congolese in Stanleyville and elsewhere as a result of the rescue of the Americans. Therefore, a third course of action might be required which would provide for the capture of Stanleyville and its control long enough to transfer control to the advancing ANC and/or to evacuate the entire non-Congolese community. This course obviously would require larger forces.

The thinking reflected in this memo thus moved planning concepts further along the road to DRAGON ROUGE.

[REDACTED]

However, as has been said, the situation in the Congo tended to simmer down at mid-September and for a month the peril to the hostages in Stanleyville seemed to have diminished.

C. SECOND PLANNING STAGE

By mid-October, information coming out of Stanleyville began to indicate increasingly severe treatment being accorded to the American and other non-Congolese hostages.

[REDACTED]

In response to the misgivings of the State Department, the Director of J-3, Joint Staff, requested the African desk officer of the European/Middle East Division of J-3 on 9 October to phone CINCSTRIKE to commence immediate detailed planning for a Stanleyville rescue operation.

At 2114Z¹ on the 14th, the JCS sent a formal message to STRIKE, requesting development of a cover plan, the JCS suggestions for which illustrated the extreme political

¹All times mentioned herein are Zulu time, unless otherwise stated. Comparative times for key cities are:

Washington - Zulu minus five hours
Brussels - Zulu plus one hour
Ascension - Zulu
Leopoldville - Zulu plus one hour
Kamina - Zulu plus two hours
Stanleyville - Zulu plus two hours

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

sensitivity of the situation. CINCSTRIKE might move initially under the guise of a routine/no-notice training exercise to an area other than the Congo; his forces should not be briefed on the mission until after leaving the U.S.; several routes should be employed for marshalling the force at Ascension Island, Wheelus AB (Libya), or Monrovia (Liberia) in order to mask the size of the force as long as possible; bogus flight plans should be filed out of the three staging bases for the final leg; the final leg should avoid known radars. It was emphasized that the cover plan could be vital to the execution and/or success of the operation.

While CINCSTRIKE was engaged in planning as directed, there occurred on the 14th an extraordinary episode which has proved, unaccountably, difficult to document. Around noon a message was received from the Ambassador in Leopoldville, reporting the radio intercept of a request from a rebel commander in Stanleyville to his superior for permission to execute the American prisoners in retaliation for an air attack by the T-28/B-26 forces.

At 1743Z on 14 October Admiral Mustin, the J-3, called the STRIKE Deputy J-5 and issued an alerting order from the CJCS with the approval of the SecDef. CINCSTRIKE's orders were to alert his forces for any of the options he had indicated in earlier planning, especially for the possibility of having to implement either of the overt plans. He was directed to report on earmarked forces, readiness status, and closure time after order to go. A reference by J-3 to the possible routes to be followed brought the reply that STRIKE could not go via Ascension.

At 1900Z on the 14th CINCSTRIKE placed forces involved in his Congo plans on DEFCON 4, but was later told not to raise to DEFCON 3 until directed by the JCS.

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Throughout the night and the next day activity continued. However, complications inhibiting immediate action soon became evident. For one thing, CINCSTRIKE had been ordered on 9 October to develop his concepts of operations into detailed plans, and while the existence of a draft plan tentatively called OPLAN 514 was known in the JCS, no copy of it had yet been forwarded.

CINCSTRIKE very early on 15 October sent in a message on Congo planning, pointing out that six weeks had elapsed since his 7 September submission of the concept of operations. The passage of time had made the covert scheme invalid in view of improved rebel training and arms. Instead he suggested his option BRAVO, involving one airborne battalion and one CASF (Composite Air Strike Force), with another airborne battalion on call at a staging base. Ascension Island would be unacceptable as a staging base prior to 20 October, the earliest date aircraft fuel could be available there in quantity, and would thereafter be suitable only for a small force. Wheelus was the favored alternative. However, he suggested concepts for two feasible plans involving the forces specified.

a. Plan BRAVO through Wheelus. From his present posture of DEFCON 4, the time Decision- to H-hour would be 55 hours 55 minutes.

b. Plan CHARLIE through Liberia-Ascension. The CASF would stage through Liberia, the troop carriers through Ascension, with the two groups marrying up over the Congo en route to Stanleyville. Decision- to H-hour would be 59 hours 50 minutes.

Neither called for any other Congo touch-down except in the objective area of Stanleyville.

[REDACTED]

CINCSTRIKE recommended that Plan BRAVO be approved for detailed planning and execution order and that Plan CHARLIE through Ascension be approved for planning as a last resort because of refueling problems, inadequate parking space, and inferior navigational aids there, as well as rendezvous difficulties, and lack of alternate en route bases. He further requested immediate U-2 coverage of Stanleyville.

The JCS replied on the same day and warned CINCSTRIKE that, while they supported his position on routing through Wheelus, they could not, as of the moment, get State Department approval. CINCSTRIKE would therefore have to be prepared to implement either BRAVO or CHARLIE.

The JCS further requested that STRIKE develop an option which provided for the parachute/air-landed assault of the second battalion into the objective area immediately following the initial battalion and to plan for a follow-up force which will be held in the U.S., prepared for deployment. CINCSTRIKE's other request, for U-2 photo coverage, was also refused, for present political guidance would not permit any flights over Stanleyville.

CINCSTRIKE was also requested to send up to four planners to the Congo for liaison and coordination with the U.S. country team members. He was reminded that all local activities were under supervision of the Ambassador, but was authorized to communicate electrically with COMISH and JTF Leo as necessary to develop and to refine his plan.

With the determination of the inadequacy of fuel stocks on Ascension and the consequent inhibition this imposed on a rapid U.S. action, the urgency left the situation. There

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

had been, furthermore, no indication from the Congo that any Americans actually had been harmed.

By 1655Z on the 15th CINCSTRIKE had sent to the JCS his CINCSTRIKE/USCINCPAC/USJTF OPLAN 514. It was essentially the plan he had sent in twelve hours earlier, but more detailed and numbered. It called for a U.S. JTF of one airborne battalion and one CASF, with two alternative routes, BRAVO the primary and CHARLIE the alternate. The BRAVO force would deploy from Harmon AFB-Torrejon-Wheelus; CHARLIE force from Ramey AFB-Ascension-Robertsfield (Liberia). The next day CINCSTRIKE further suggested provision for follow-on forces.

He also sent a cover plan in on the 17th, recommending that the JCS-suggested plan was too complex to be practical and that reliance be placed on military security measures alone.

CINCSTRIKE's insistence upon the Wheelus route illustrated the continuing political emphasis in the whole Congo affair, an emphasis which was felt at the expense of military expediency. A JCSM to the SecDef on 14 October had urged him to appeal to the State Department to rescind their restrictions on overflights and the use of Wheelus based upon fear of adverse political consequences if Wheelus were in any way used for such a mission. The CJCS had stated that the required reroute added 1500 nautical miles to the flight and cost \$2,400 more per aircraft. He added pointedly that it was doubtful that the State Department was fully aware of the military implications created by such rerouting.

After the Chairman's review of OPLAN 514 of the 17th, he again pressed the Wheelus issue with the SecDef and Mr.

[REDACTED]

Vance, stressing urgent preference for the Wheelus route and the importance of "strong support for all measures necessary to assure us that use." Additional emphasis had been laid in these discussions upon the disadvantages that the limited refueling rates at Ascension and Robertsfield imposed in terms of lengthy cycle times. As a result, a second follow-up battalion from the staging area could not be available for employment in the objective area until long after the assault, possibly as long as twenty-four hours later. This time separation was seen to be possibly crucial since the objective area held a population of perhaps 200,000 to 300,000.¹

The one great advantage of the southern route, however, lay in the greatly reduced risk of premature discovery of the operation. This matter of secrecy and surprise was fully as critical and was to remain a major issue in the whole Congo episode. The conflicting requirements of political considerations, military efficiency, and secrecy bedeviled planners up to the very last minute.

Consequently, the CJCS, for fullest exploitation of the Wheelus capabilities and in the hope of achieving State Department consent, requested CINCSTRIKE to add to Plan BRAVO an option which put the second battalion over or in the objective area as soon as feasible. In addition, a backup force on call would still be provided.

By the 19th OPLAN 514, now redesignated OPLAN 519 because of a possible security compromise, was sent to the JCS by STRIKE in revised form superseding other earlier forms. It had also received the name HIGH BEAM. It was

¹While a 1958 census figure for Stanleyville was 75,000, a large but quite indeterminate influx of population from outlying areas had occurred during the endless upheavals and turmoil of the first four years of Congo independence. Estimates of current population in the city, therefore, tended to vary widely.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

reviewed on a priority basis and reported by J-3 to the JCS on the 21st. The J-3 report stated that the plan alternative using Ascension was considered militarily undesirable, but that in recognition of the fact that U.S. forces might be committed under circumstances which prohibited the use of African staging bases and the overflight of African countries, CINCSTRIKE was being requested to provide the JCS with an evaluation of the feasibility of employing the maximum force that could be staged through Ascension to seize Stanleyville, evacuate the hostages, and withdraw.

By this date, however, for the second time, the Congo situation seemed to ease somewhat and immediate fears for the safety of the hostages abated. On 5 November the requirement to retain OPLAN 519 forces on alert was terminated by the JCS. As a result, no action was taken by the JCS on the J-3 HIGH BEAM report until 12 November, by which time the situation was becoming dangerous again and the DRAGON ROUGE plan was in process of formulation. HIGH BEAM was approved on that day with the recognition that while the southern route plan was militarily undesirable and was a last resort, political and security requirements demanded that STRIKE provide the JCS with the evaluation suggested by J-3. However, HIGH BEAM was overtaken by events and nothing further developed from it before the rescue mission was undertaken.

II. COMBINED BELGIAN-AMERICAN PLANNING

On November 3th the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Spaak, visited Washington for a day. The purpose of his visit was to discuss with U.S. officials economic matters and the problem of the NATO multilateral force. At one of the meetings the subject of the Congo was raised by the Belgians. In the light of intelligence coming from the Congo, where once again, with the erratic unpredictability characteristic of the Congo situation, the plight of the hostages suddenly became grave, it was agreed between Spaak and the Americans to commence immediately some combined planning aimed at a possible rescue of the hostages.

The new turn of events in the Congo resulted, curiously, from the success of Government forces. On November 1st several ANC columns began advancing against the rebel-held Northeast along ground access lines from the South and West under the command of Colonel Frederic Van der Walle, a Belgian officer serving the GDRC. Extremely capable and experienced, Van der Walle (who was always referred to as VDW and will be so referred to in this text) had devised the plan (see Figure 2) for reconquest of rebel territory with such great care that none of the Americans of the JTF or COMISH had the slightest doubt of his ultimate success.

The VDW plan consisted of a three-phase effort involving several separate columns. In the first phase, five columns would drive deep into rebel territory, the main column striking north to the vicinity of Punia on November 14th. In the second phase, this same column, the main attack, would drive from Punia to Ponthieville and on to capture Stanleyville.

[REDACTED]

The third phase was to consist of a mop-up drive along the line Kamina-Punia. The drives are illustrated on Figure 2. preceding this page.

However, as VDW drove deeper into rebel territory in early November, the fear arose that the hostages in Stanleyville might be massacred by retreating rebels as VDW approached the city. The rebel threat in early October to kill American hostages in reprisal for GDRC air attacks, a threat which had inspired the U.S. October planning phase, again seemed to come alive.

It would appear that both the Belgians and the Americans felt that the situation in Stanleyville could not be allowed to continue, and that it could only grow worse. When VDW drew close to Stanleyville, the hostages would be in mortal peril. Presumably, too, both sides had grown impatient with repeated rises in tension and realized that the hostages, unless freed, would be a continuing source of concern.

The Belgian interest was obvious since the greatest single foreign community in the Congo consisted of Belgian subjects. In the early months of the Congo rebellion the Belgians had adopted a matter-of-fact attitude toward it, and had attempted to accommodate to the new rebel regime. Their attitude had changed suddenly when, on October 28, the Belgians living in Stanleyville were declared hostages and were confined, instead of being permitted to pursue a normal existence.

However, it is unclear as to which side took the initiative in urging combined planning for possible military operations. [There is strong evidence that it was the U.S. which prompted the Belgians. A cable from the Ambassador in Brussels to the State Department on 14 November commented on Spaak's] R

[hardening attitude toward the Congo and on his increasing support for a rescue operation. The cable stated significantly: "He has come a long way since last weekend when we pressed him hard to assume the heavy political responsibility of using Belgian paratroops to free Americans, Belgians, and others."]

[Spaak's reluctance apparently arose from his recognition that Belgian paratroopers killing Africans would have the worst possible effect in recalling the events of July 1960 upon Belgian-African relationships. Even American paratroopers would have been less politically offensive. Furthermore, he was probably concerned over the effect of a Stanleyville operation upon the safety of Belgians scattered elsewhere through the rebel territory.]

As a result of the Spaak agreement the JCS directed that four U.S. planners be sent to Brussels on 10 November. Brigadier General Russell E. Dougherty (USEUCOM) headed the mission and was accompanied by Lt. Colonel James Dunn (J-3, Joint Staff), Lt. Colonel James Gray (USAFE), and Captain B. Brasher (8th Infantry Division). They were sent in utmost secrecy and in civilian clothes, and reported to the Ambassador for routing to the Belgians. Within the Embassy itself knowledge of their mission was very closely held.

It is not known why CINCSTRIKE planners who had been involved in the subject for two months were not included. STRIKE was first notified by phone that Belgian-American planning would be undertaken, and then on the 11th received an information copy of the JCS message to CINCEUR naming the JCS representative to the Brussels conference. No JCS officers connected with the Congo episode visited STRIKE until a week after the operations had ended.

[REDACTED]

Similarly, JTF Leo was not informed of the planning as late as the 14th, and within the Leo country team, the Deputy Chief of Mission, COMISH, [REDACTED] were the only persons informed in addition to the Ambassador.

It has been suggested that there is a tendency for the JCS to turn to CINCEUR in time of sub-Saharan African crises because of a presumed nearness and speed of approach. However, it is pointed out by STRIKE officers that if overflights are forbidden and Wheelus cannot be used, the flight from Europe around the bulge of Africa is almost as long as a flight directly from the U.S. Furthermore, it is claimed that sudden switches only complicate command arrangements.

A. THE BRUSSELS PLANNING CONFERENCE

On arrival in Brussels on the 11th, General Dougherty met with Ambassador MacArthur to discuss their understanding of the mission and to come to an agreement on the approach to be used.

The first meeting with the Belgians was at the Foreign Ministry, the second at the Ministry of Defense. The Belgians stated that they were considering a battalion-size force staged from outside the Congo. Although initial guidance to the U.S. planners had been in terms of a company-size effort, [Ambassador MacArthur authorized them to proceed along the lines of the Belgian request.] All they asked of the Americans was twelve C-130Es. USAFE had only sixteen such aircraft, and with a 24 percent out-of-commission rate there remained available the exact number required by the Belgians. The aircraft were to come from the 464th Troop Carrier Group. R

Upon being advised of the Belgian proposal, the State Department on the 11th objected to a battalion-size force. R

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[from outside-country, claiming that in the Washington discussions of the enterprise, the Belgians had discussed only a company-size force from Kamina or Leopoldville. State was puzzled over why the Belgians had apparently radically altered their views of the week before, and urged the U.S. planners to concentrate on a small force from in-country, which, they felt, could be moved relatively inconspicuously. Ambassador MacArthur, however, refuted this claim, denying that any commitment to the smaller force had been made in the Washington discussions. The origin of this misunderstanding remains vague.] Apparently the misunderstanding went beyond just State, since in a phone call from the CJCS to the Director, Joint Staff, on the 11th, the Chairman stated that only a one-company drop was being considered. R

It was decided that a single U.S.-Belgian operations plan should be developed which could be:

- a. Coordinated with the Belgian staff.
- b. Submitted to the military and political elements of both governments in sufficient detail to permit understanding of agreed points.
- c. Executed, after approval, by fragmentary order of both governments without requiring additional formal planning at lower levels.

In recognition of the absence of an established U.S.-Belgian doctrine, the U.S. planners were instructed to follow the Belgian lead and to adapt to their desires. This proved effective and enhanced Belgian acceptance of U.S. suggestions.

Conference objectives were to devise methods which would permit force deployment on a secure and timely basis, yet would preserve the element of surprise during the employment phase. Three main problems hampered this phase of the

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operation. Belgian political sensitivities initially precluded early alerting of the airborne force prior to a decision to execute. Within hours of the completion of the planning, however, this Belgian attitude underwent a dramatic change. There was also a problem of secrecy and the necessary cover plan. Lastly, the best route to the Congo militarily was forbidden.

Early in the meetings the American representatives had suggested the use of Wheelus. The suggestion was made despite known State opinion, since the planners looked upon the projected operation as essentially a Belgian one, and thus possibly in this case, Wheelus might be useable. However, an immediate restatement of State Department opposition caused the planners to switch their focus to Ascension. It will be recalled that the HIGH BEAM plan contemplated a launch flight direct from Ascension to Stanleyville. However, CINCEUR felt this was infeasible except under optimum conditions which were highly unlikely. Therefore, with Wheelus unavailable and a direct Ascension-Stanleyville leg infeasible, the original idea of out-of-country staging collapsed. Some Congo staging base was required and the choice lay between Leopoldville and Kamina. While Leo had superior refueling facilities, it presented an insuperable security problem, since observation of incoming aircraft could have been quickly relayed via Brazzaville sources to the rebels. Kamina, therefore, was selected.

A planning agreement was reached the night of the 13th and by the following morning the DRAGON ROUGE plan had been written.

The planning conference had been successful in carrying out its terms of reference. Both sides had fully understood

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the limits of the discussion, so no problem arose of misunderstandings in regard to commitments. The discussions were accepted as constituting nothing more than discussions, and the only commitments made were commitments to plan. The Americans had never revealed anything of U.S. unilateral planning, nor had the Belgians asked. The performance of the four American planners was highly commended in a message from the Ambassador to the Secretary of State.

The Ambassador had not sat in on the meetings, but was represented by his Deputy Chief of Mission during the first day's discussions. The American planners did meet with the Ambassador twice a day, however, in order to brief him on the progress of the talks.

The Brussels Planning Agreement of 13 November was a preliminary statement of responsibilities from which the plan emerged. The U.S. had committed itself to planning for the use of EUCOM-based C-130Es and support as required to transport a Belgian airborne unit from Belgium to Stanleyville and for emergency evacuation of the hostages to Leopoldville.

The Belgian Government committed itself to planning for use of an airdropped and airlanded Belgian force and its equipment for an assault on Stanleyville as required to secure the airfield and to liberate the hostages.

Three key points should be stressed. Decision to execute would be made jointly by the Belgian and U.S. Governments. For the actual operation the en route go/no-go decision was to be the airlift commander's; the drop decision over the drop zone was to be the paratroop commander's. Once on the ground, the force was to be commanded by the paratroop commander. Postponement of the operation was to be by mutual

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[REDACTED]

agreement of the two commanders. The execution order was to be transmitted at the latest twelve hours before the first takeoff from Belgium.

The American role was carefully specified. The mission of the C-130Es was to end when all that was to be delivered was delivered and when the evacuation of hostages was completed.

It should be noted that the agreement did not provide for the redeployment of the battalion to Belgium. The subject was not mentioned by the Belgians in Brussels, so the issue never arose. The American planners assumed that the Belgians planned on withdrawing the paratroopers by commercial air. Since the American team had received no prior instructions on the subject, they too ignored the issue. The omission seems quite extraordinary in view of the general awareness of the great political sensitivity of the situation.

The State Department immediately recognized the problem when the DRAGON ROUGE plan was issued and foresaw the political danger involved in leaving the Belgian force in the Congo. The State Department noted the omission in a message to Ambassador MacArthur in Brussels on the 16th. Apparently assuming the omission was deliberate and at the Belgian request, the Department asked the Ambassador to ascertain whether the Belgians had in mind further missions for the DRAGON ROUGE force, once rescue operations were completed. The concern of the Department was expressed, and the belief in a rapid evacuation of the paratroopers by the U.S. aircraft on the conclusion of rescue operations was stressed. This would preserve the most defensible public record of a humanitarian operation. Correction of this matter was to be undertaken shortly in the follow-up planning session.

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B. THE DRAGON ROUGE PLAN

USCINCEUR Draft Operations Plan 3--/64 (DRAGON ROUGE) was prepared by 0400Z 14 November. It stated its mission as planning for U.S. assault and evacuation airlift operations in support of a Belgian paratroop attack on rebel forces in Stanleyville, designed to: secure the airfield; locate and liberate the non-Congolese captives; escort those desiring evacuation to the airfield; evacuate these people to Leopoldville.

The plan pointed out that as the Congo Army forces advanced, the safety and survival of the hostages might be threatened to the point that extraordinary measures would be required by mobile external forces to liberate and to evacuate the hostages before the arrival of ANC ground forces or when those forces arrived and attacked the city. The primary avenue of attack on the city would be the Congo Army force coming from the south and expected to resume its advance north from Punia approximately 17-18 November, with an estimated time of arrival at Stanleyville of 22 November.

The plan stated that at the termination of the planning conference, the Belgians announced that their Government did not anticipate any possibility of an execution order requiring deployment prior to 17 November.

The concept of operations called for 12 C-130E's to transport a Belgian paracommando battalion of 545 men, eight jeeps, and 12 motorcycles from Belgium to Stanleyville. The aircraft route would be Evreux (France) - Kleine-Brogel (Belgium) - Torrejon or Moron (Spain)(USAFE choice) - Las Palmas (Canary Islands) - Ascension Island (British) - Kamina (Congo) - Stanleyville. Twelve or more hours would be allowed

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[REDACTED]

for rest and refuel at Ascension with departure for Kamina scheduled to arrive there in darkness hours. To support the CINCEUR air effort, CINCSTRIKE would be requested to have the JTF Leo position its four AFSTRIKE in-country C-130ES at Kamina prior to the arrival of the EUCOM aircraft.

It should be noted that the entire Wheelus northern route--Ascension southern route dispute was ended by this plan. Original planning at CINCSTRIKE had not contemplated any staging of aircraft in the Congo, making for a risky flight in terms of fuel and distance. Once it was decided to stage through Kamina, the previous military superiority of the Wheelus route was negated.

The State Department's responsibilities were to obtain en route, staging, and overflight rights as required; to assume responsibility for the U.S. evacuees in Leopoldville; to arrange for appropriate diplomatic representatives to assume responsibility for non-U.S. evacuees on arrival in Leopoldville.

CINCSTRIKE was to provide assistance through the facilities and capabilities of COMISH and JTF Leo; to deploy the four JTF Leo aircraft to Kamina; to provide U.S. current intelligence briefings for the crews and the airborne commander at Kamina prior to the assault; to provide one JTF Leo C-130 for subsequent D-Day evacuation sortie; to provide JTF Leo support for the recovery and redeployment of the twelve-craft EUCOM C-130 force.

Since only C-130E aircraft could accomplish this mission and since there were just sixteen in EUCOM, careful scheduling was called for during the vulnerability period for execution of the plan to preclude inability to mount the mission.

[REDACTED]

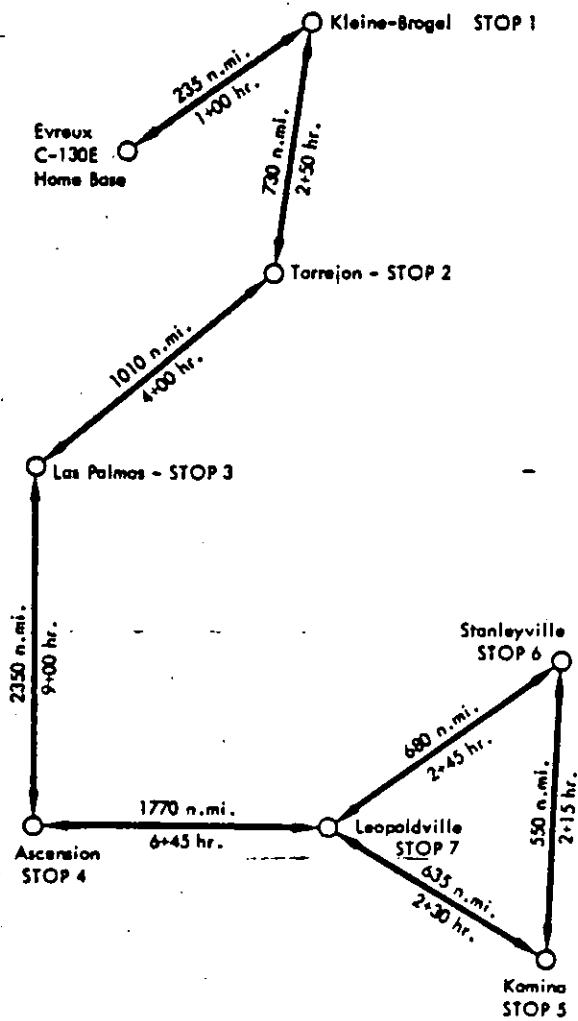
Political/military considerations were such that the first launch from Kleine-Brogel was not to be expected prior to 1950Z on 17 November. The possibility of execution in the 7 to 10-day period following was to be considered great.

The security of the operation was stressed as unusually critical. The Belgian forces would require a minimum of twelve hours' notification prior to launch from Kleine-Brogel. The U.S. desired to land its aircraft at Ascension during daylight hours. These two factors, plus the desirability of going through a Spanish base for refueling during darkness hours for additional security, dictated a first launch time from Kleine-Brogel of 1840Z. Therefore, an execution decision made after 0640Z of any given day would require a delay in launch until 1840Z of the following day.

The Belgian troop commander (who had been present at the Brussels planning conference) had selected 0400Z (day-break 0600 local) as his desired drop time.

Command and control arrangements represented a compromise of jurisdictions. CINCEUR was to pass operational control of the assault airlift force to CINCSTRIKE upon arrival of the force at Kamina. In turn, CINCSTRIKE would pass operational command of the airlift force to CINCEUR upon redeployment from Leopoldville en route to Wheelus during the return trip. The idea of transfer to CINCSTRIKE at Kamina was based upon the thought that if the force were deployed as far as Ascension and then the entire operation were called off, it would be much simpler administratively and would provide closer security if only one headquarters had been involved instead of two.

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1. Distances approximate.
2. Times based on 270 knots, no wind, plus allowance for climb.

FIGURE 3. DRAGON ROUGE Time/Distance Chart

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FIGURE 3

[REDACTED]

The plan states that because of the particular way in which the combined planning for the operation was conducted, any desired deviations from the timing, concept of operations, or agreements between planning representatives of the U.S. and Belgian Governments, except in cases of emergency, must be referred to the JCS, info CINCEUR and CINCSTRIKE.

Finally, the airlift commander would inform CINCSTRIKE, info CINCEUR and CINCUSAFE, when he was prepared for redeployment from Stanleyville.

After some minor changes the plan was transmitted to the JCS at 2350Z 14 November as USCINCEUR Special Operations Plan 319/64. The plan was approved by the JCS on 16 November and was adopted in toto by CINCSTRIKE as STRIKE OPLAN 319.

C. SOME PROBLEMS OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

There was some questioning of the plan, however, by both CINCSTRIKE and CINCEUR. On the 15th CINCEUR sent his approval of DRAGON ROUGE to the Ambassador in Brussels but requested clarification as to whether the operation was to be considered Belgian, U.S., or joint. He also asked who the operational commander responsible for making the decision (go/no-go timing) from Kamina to Stanleyville was, recommending it be a Belgian. The Ambassador informed him that the operation was conceived of as a Belgian one, but that the decision to undertake it was combined Belgian-U.S. He also agreed that for political reasons a Belgian should be in command in the actual assault. The decision to launch for Stanleyville would be joint; but once the drop was made, the Belgians were in command of the assault and rescue operations.

A major criticism of the plan was sent on the same day to the JCS by CINCSTRIKE. He accused the plan of violating

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[REDACTED]

the principles both of mass by dribbling in forces and of command by dividing responsibility for drop among each of the twelve planes. He stated bluntly that since STRIKE had not been permitted to take part in the DRAGON ROUGE planning, CINCEUR should be permitted to retain operational control of the whole operation, with STRIKE providing the support called for. CINCSTRIKE reiterated his belief that the best chance of success lay with vigorous execution of the VDW drive, plus coordinated execution of LOW BEAM, a covert plan. In the event this should fail to achieve the objectives, he advocated execution of HIGH BEAM.

CINCEUR, at 1914Z on the 16th, forwarded several recommendations to the JCS which went far toward easing command relationships. He recommended deployment to Ascension on 17 November, and that there be a sole commander from Kamina onward and that he be a Belgian. In view of the possible need for follow-up operations, he insisted, obviously in answer to CINCSTRIKE's complaint, that CINCSTRIKE assume operational control either at Kamina or Ascension and on through all as yet unplanned possible contingencies. This would utilize fully the JTF and their good in-country relationships with the Belgians and the Congolese. He also stressed the need for STRIKE participation in future planning conferences.

Lastly, he recommended against any idea of going from Ascension directly to Stanleyville, because of the fuel problem, weather, recce, and the necessity to join up with the B-26 force in the Congo. All these factors, he stressed, dictated the need for staging through Kamina. Presumably this comment was made in reply to criticism from some quarters, [probably State Department,] of the DRAGON ROUGE provision for staging at Kamina. R

[REDACTED]

Late on the 17th CINCSTRIKE pointed out to the JCS that in planning for DRAGON ROUGE two courses of action had been considered: 1) a launch from Kamina against Stanleyville if the operation proceeded according to the written plan; 2) a launch from Ascension direct to Stanleyville if an emergency should arise. In order to simplify command arrangements, especially in the event possibility number two came to pass, CINCSTRIKE requested that operational control pass to him at Ascension.

The next day CINCEUR notified the JCS that he did not object to operational control passing to CINCSTRIKE at Ascension, but wished to point out again that, while the possibility of a launch from Ascension direct to Stanleyville had been considered in the planning, DRAGON ROUGE envisaged assault only from Kamina, since an assault launch from Ascension was decided to be operationally unsound.

By this time the force had been directed to deploy to Ascension. On the 20th the JCS ordered transfer of operational control of the force to CINCSTRIKE, thus ending the major command and control issue of the operation.

The transfer should have been expedited by the presence on Ascension of a STRIKE officer sent there to assist the operation. However, this officer was junior to the CINCEUR airlift commander, so that effectively the transfer of control to STRIKE did not occur until Kamina after all. Here, the commander of JTF Leo, as the senior STRIKE/MEAFSA officer in-country, had been directed by CINCSTRIKE to assume operational control of the airlift upon their arrival and to exercise that control through the CINCEUR force commander.

CINCEUR's suggestion of the 16th that the final go/no-go decision from Kamina to Stanleyville should rest with the Belgian

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

assault commander, once the two governments had directed execution of DRAGON ROUGE, was also approved by the JCS and incorporated into an amendment to the plan late on the 18th.

Tactical Air Support

Because of the slimness of the planned assault force and since strike aircraft had previously exerted considerable psychological effect, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The JCS provided CINCSTRIKE on November 20 with planning guidance in regard to tactical air support of DRAGON ROUGE. Actions were listed which had been undertaken to ensure that maximum possible protection would be provided the DRAGON force by the available supporting B-26 and T-28 aircraft. The USCINCEUR planners had been advised verbally by J-3 that the escorting B-26s were to be instructed to fire on any target posing a threat and were not required to wait until fired upon before opening fire. [REDACTED] it was expected that the B-26s and T-28s would:

- a. Accomplish weather recce in the Stanleyville area prior to the drop time, but recce aircraft would remain a minimum of fifteen miles from the city.
- b. Fly column cover for the transport aircraft during the assault.
- c. Provide air support as required for the assault force in the objective area. Pilots were to withhold offensive fire, unless ground weapons posed a clear threat to transports or paratroops, in which case they would be instructed to fire for effect on sources of rebel fire or to provide random fire on suspected areas. Pilots were authorized to open fire on ground weapons such as AA or

[REDACTED]

machine guns which posed a clear threat, or as specifically called upon by the force commander, even though these weapons had not yet begun to fire.

CINCSTRIKE was asked to ensure that a minimum of two and preferably three B-26s plus such T-28s as were available be provided for column escort.

On the 21st CINCSTRIKE discussed the B-26 and T-28 support question in a message to the JCS. He raised two issues, weather recce and close support. In regard to the first, he pointed out that COMUS JTF Leo had reported that the B-26s were incapable of conducting weather recce because of the very limited number of pilots qualified for night flying. He recommended that either the launch be made without weather recce or that a JTFC-130 be utilized for the mission. As to air support, CINCSTRIKE quoted COMUS JTF who expected to have a small mixed force of B-26s and T-28s available for ground fire suppression in the drop area, with the intention of launching the attack force when the drop force passed the Kindu area. Col. Isaacson, the JTF Leo Commander, had stated that he felt it was imperative for him to maintain positive control of these aircraft to prevent an early tip-off of Stanleyville forces or a shoot-up of friendly forces in the drop area. His planning and coordination were addressed to this problem of night take-off and effective support in the drop area. He also bluntly stated that if further investigation revealed that his current concern was justified, he would recommend that the drop go without air support, personally feeling that the advantage of surprise was more important than the best that could be expected from available strike aircraft and their crews.

[REDACTED]

CINCSTRIKE had approved use of the C-130 for weather recce, but not closer than twenty-five miles of Stanleyville. As to the strike aircraft, he had informed COMUS JTF Leo that it was essential that these aircraft be employed to the maximum extent practicable to ensure the safety of the C-130 stream, while making every coordination effort necessary to minimize the hazards of collision.

Within an hour CINCSTRIKE notified the JCS of his further thoughts on the matter. Stressing the lack of training and the poor results that could be expected on the part of the strike planes, as opposed to the danger from ground fire to low slow-flying transports, he suggested some fundamental changes. Since he felt surprise was unlikely now anyway, he proposed that the commanders on the ground be authorized to employ the strike aircraft as they chose. He also proposed that the commanders be allowed to adjust H-hour to any time they considered to offer the greatest chance of success, with the full understanding that this would envision the use of the strike aircraft prior to the actual drop to eliminate actual or suspected sources of hostile fire. This consideration included the possibility of a night drop without close air support, since at this period the moon would be almost full.

In short, CINCSTRIKE was extremely concerned over the inadequate and inflexible air cover that would be provided under present command arrangements. He received JCS approval for his proposal, and was able to direct COMUS JTF Leo at 1212Z on the 22nd that he and the Belgian troop commander were authorized to adopt an H-hour which they considered most conducive to ensuring success of the operation, and that they were also authorized to employ the B-26s and T-28s in an armed recce role immediately preceding the C-130 column.

III! MAKING THE DECISION: STEP ONE

The period November 15-23 was the decision-making phase for DRAGON ROUGE. It presents a fascinating example of the manifold pressures and considerations which must be taken into account by decision makers. It involved really not just one decision but three: the decision to move to Ascension; the decision to move to Kamina; the decision to execute the drop on Stanleyville. Each step raised essentially the same issues but presented them from a different angle. Throughout the whole phase the key issues were time and lack of accurate information; the two key questions: 1) Was DRAGON ROUGE really necessary; 2) When should it be implemented?

The decision was overwhelmingly political in character; the U.S. military role in the affair was minor. There was never any question of U.S. military capability to carry out its assigned mission. The few military constraints which appeared were minor, essentially logistic in nature, and easily surmounted.

Nor was it a matter of State-military differences. There were activists on both sides who pushed for execution of the plan, and, within State there was even a group willing to use U.S. forces in HIGH BEAM to rescue the Americans. [It is true, however, that the State Department generally displayed an extreme hesitation and as time ran short, they seemed to grasp at any straw which might have obviated DRAGON ROUGE, no matter how slight that straw might be or how damaging its possible consequences.] R

The real constraints were political and they were monumental. It should be recognized, in order to understand the actions taken and positions assumed during these eight days, that all parties concerned were reluctant to undertake a Congo intervention. No one had any heart for this sort of affair which.

[REDACTED] would inevitably bring in its wake unhappy political consequences.

[The Belgians were basically reluctant, although Spaak's attitude underwent some transformation. The U.S. was hesitant and the hesitation grew as the days passed. Even the Congo Government was not wildly enthusiastic, since VDW was succeeding without DRAGON ROUGE help. As a result of this reluctance, before the business was over the U.S. had experienced differences of opinion with both the Belgians and the GDRC.] R

The mechanism set up to make the three decisions required for DRAGON ROUGE was ad hoc and also tripartite. It grew along with the situation. The decisions would first be called for by the U.S. and Belgian Ambassadors in Leopoldville, they having come to their own decision that a step was in order, in view both of the situation in Stanleyville and of the progress of the VDW columns. The U.S. tended to rely heavily upon the Belgian assessment of the situation and then, following a Belgian decision, the U.S. made its decision. The Ambassadors in Leopoldville were cogent in their appeals for action; the U.S. was usually slow to decide. Actually, once the VDW-DRAGON ROUGE relationship was seen to be inevitable, there really was an even earlier decision step. VDW would make his assessment and recommend to the Ambassadors in Leopoldville that DRAGON ROUGE be launched.

[Within the Congo, Godley was the coordinator and chief information center for the U.S. role. He and the Belgian Ambassador DeKerchove worked closely with VDW in an extremely effective field team.] R

On November 15 there gathered at the State Department a group who became the decision makers, and who continued to meet with increasing frequency thereafter. The group consisted of the Secretary of State, Under Secretary of State Ball, Deputy

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Secretary of Defense Vance, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Harriman, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Williams, Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs Cleveland, the CJCS, the Vice Director of Operations, Joint Staff (Major General McPherson), Ambassador Palmer (head of the interdepartmental Congo working Group), Mr. Brubeck (White House Staff), Lt. Col. Dunn (J-3). The same personnel attended all the meetings except for one meeting on November 21st which Secretary Rusk did not attend. The Secretary of Defense attended only once, being fully occupied with budget affairs and the problem of military base closing. Consequently, Mr. Vance was given the senior Department of Defense responsibility.

Following the initial November 15 meeting, the group met again the next day, this time to order the move to Ascension. Meetings began again on the 21st and were held once or twice a day until DRAGON ROUGE was executed. The meetings usually lasted two or three hours, and were chaired by the senior State man present.

The President during this period was at his ranch in Texas but was informed, presumably by Secretary Rusk, of the results of each meeting. His approval would be required for execution of DRAGON ROUGE and it was necessary accordingly to provide him with a full account of the nature of the decisions and the operative constraints.

An emergency procedure was developed by the Congo Working Group for arriving at a rapid U.S. decision in the event that the situation in Stanleyville very suddenly became desperate and the immediate execution of DRAGON ROUGE became imperative. This is shown in Figure 4. However, as events did develop, the emergency never arose, and the final decision to take the third step to Stanleyville was taken on a more measured basis and by the regular mechanism of the State/Defense group meeting on the 23rd.

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EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR ARRIVING AT U.S. DECISION

1. On receipt of a recommendation from either Brussels or Leopoldville to implement DRAGON ROUGE, the Senior Watch Officer in the Operations Center will so inform the Duty General Officer at the NMCC and ask him to send the agreed alert message. NMCC will also have the responsibility for notifying Secretary Vance, General Wheeler, and Mr. McNaughton concerning the recommendation to implement DRAGON ROUGE.
2. The Senior Watch Officer will then call Ambassador Palmer and Mr. Brubeck advising that a recommendation had been received from Brussels or Leopoldville to implement DRAGON ROUGE.
3. Ambassador Palmer will immediately notify Secretary Rusk or the Acting Secretary and anyone else he deems necessary.
4. The Secretary of State will take necessary steps for obtaining Presidential decision.
5. Mr. Brubeck will notify the appropriate personnel in the White House staff.
6. Once the Presidential decision to implement is taken, the Secretary of State will advise Secretary Vance who will issue the implementing order through military channels.
7. After the implementing order has been issued, Ambassador Palmer will consult Governor Harriman regarding calling immediately an inter-agency meeting to determine necessary consequential actions. Meeting will include Secretary Rusk, Governor Harriman, Governor Williams, Mr. Read, Mr. McElhiney, Mr. Long, and Mr. Brubeck.

(Procedure cleared with ISA & JCS)

FIGURE 4

[REDACTED]

A. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION:

It would appear from the record of messages that the U.S. began to have second thoughts even before the DRAGON ROUGE plan was developed. Having urged the Belgians to take action and then agreed to the planning conference, [the messages from State began to show a tone of increasing hesitation before the conference ended. Presumably this was the consequence of the clarification of the knotty problems surrounding the situation and also of the desire to hold back as long as possible the pressures that pushed us to the ultimate decision.] R

On the evening of the 13th State sent a message jointly to the Ambassadors in Brussels and Leo which [spelled out the desire for caution. The Department wished to assure that both MacArthur and Godley understood with the Department that U.S. willingness to engage with Belgium in contingency planning did not indicate any predisposition toward military intervention in the Congo. The purpose of the planning was simply to be prepared for any contingency. It would only be in the event of "demonstrated imminent peril" to the foreign community of Stanleyville that we would consider a rescue operation involving U.S. forces and then only at the highest level of decision. The Department believed this had been made clear to Spaak when he was in Washington, but if either MacArthur or Godley felt there were the slightest doubt or misunderstanding, they should immediately make clear the U.S. position to their Belgian colleagues. Furthermore, in regard to the GDRC, the Department instructed Godley not to consult with Premier Tshombe until the last possible moment after the need for the drop became clear.] R

This message, and the reply from Godley which it evoked, raised the first major problem and led inexorably to the first

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

step in the three step decision. Godley replied the next morning, [pointing out that the State message brought to light a very serious problem of timing. As he understood the message, an imminent peril to the Stanleyville hostages would have to be demonstrated before consultations were begun with Tshombe, after which the matter would have to be studied at the highest levels of the U.S. Government. Then and then only would the U.S. make its own decision in regard to U.S. military participation, which in turn would be followed by U.S. agreement to lift Belgian paratroopers to a staging area. Godley called this approach totally unrealistic, hammering home the point that we were dealing in minutes, not days. To wait for the killing of hostages to begin, or the "clear imminent peril", would be too late, since it would take at least seventy-two hours from the time of U.S. decision until help reached Stanleyville.] R

[Godley urged immediate U.S. participation in securing concurrence from both Tshombe and VDW as soon as possible. He suggested that the paratroops be moved to Ascension without Tshombe's knowledge or consent and that they could be held on the island until the moment of crisis. Kamina, he suggested, was not satisfactory because of the security problem. He stressed that the U.S. must have made its decision before he and the Belgian Ambassador, DeKerchove, consulted Tshombe and the force must be ready at hand for immediate use.] R

Thus the problem of timing was brought to the forefront. It remained as the single most vital factor in the decision. There were two aspects to it. Godley had raised the question of whether the DRAGON ROUGE force could get to Stanleyville on time, starting from scratch. This was a purely military aspect of timing. The DRAGON ROUGE plan, it will be recalled, presupposed an airlift direct from Belgium to Stanleyville with stops at the en route bases only for refueling and short rest. It did not contemplate

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[REDACTED]

prepositioning the force. Yet if the decision were to be made only when the hostages were in dire peril, the troops very likely would not arrive before the hostages had been killed. The operation then would have been worse than useless.

The second aspect of timing was military and political. It was raised by State in a message to MacArthur just minutes after the above mentioned despatch. [MacArthur was directed to urge the Belgians to maintain tight control of ANC forces in order to allow the VDW plan to get underway and to allow it and the rescue mission to be coordinated.] Reports were coming out of the Congo of ANC columns moving out of phase, and it was critical to have ANC operations go in phase until the moment when the U.S.-Belgian decision was made. Uncoordinated rushes by the ANC columns could put the hostages in mortal peril before either we or VDW were in a position to relieve them. R

There was then a very definite relationship between VDW's operations and DRAGON ROUGE. Throughout the decision phase perhaps the keenest dilemma was presented by this relationship. Militarily it was utterly inevitable and indispensable; politically it could be extremely damaging. Major efforts were devoted to being able simultaneously to enjoy the military benefit of the relationship while avoiding the political onus. However, the political onus was not as apparent at this date. What was important was the need to juggle two timings. We hoped that VDW would reach Stanleyville and rescue the hostages, thus possibly making DRAGON ROUGE unnecessary. At the same time we hoped the rebels would not kill the hostages before VDW reached the city. The two timings were related, since the closer VDW drew to the city, the more likely it was that the rebels would kill the hostages, and therefore the more likely it was that DRAGON ROUGE would have to be launched in a desperate effort to save them.

B. THE DECISION TO MOVE TO ASCENSION

Step One in the decision-- the deployment of the DRAGON ROUGE force to Ascension resulted from the pressure exerted by the two timing factors described above. In fact, all three steps in the total decision resulted from the same calculations of time and effect, based upon the same set of factors. R

[Late on the 14th MacArthur reported that Spaak's attitude was hardening. Rebel emissaries who had appeared in Kenya and were talking about some sort of negotiations were reported merely to be stalling until outside aid came into the Congo for the rebels. Spaak was now convinced that the capture of Stanleyville should proceed as quickly as possible. R
A.

[Spaak had reviewed the contingency plan and set it against the situation, and had come to the same conclusion as Godley, that the time involved in an air drop beginning in Belgium and going with only refueling and minimum rest stops would be too great in a crisis. The hostages could not be saved. Thus Spaak recommended the plan be changed to permit prepositioning at either Kamina or Ascension just about the time VDW began his drive. This would mean a launch from Belgium November 17 and a holding of men, equipment, and aircraft at a staging base for several days. He too felt Ascension the better choice because of secrecy requirements. R

[The Belgian Foreign Minister also had apparently come to the conclusion that the hostages were in mortal peril and that action to save them must follow decision within a very few hours at most. MacArthur stated that, assuming VDW confirmed his plans and agreed R

[to the move, he expected Spaak would ask the next day for the U.S. to move the DRAGON ROUGE force to a forward staging area. The Ambassador urged the Secretary of State that he be allowed to give Spaak an affirmative answer. While the actual decision to go to Stanleyville would have to be made later, MacArthur felt that to refuse now would seriously undermine Belgian confidence in the U.S. and jeopardize the essential cooperation needed from the Belgians. Furthermore, if the hostages were slaughtered, the U.S. would be blamed because the paratroops were not close enough to intervene in time.] R

The State/Defense group met on the 15th to consider the expected Spaak request. Apparently the issue of Wheelus arose again, with the military representatives urging its use as the quickest route in an emergency and one which would avoid any prepositioning. State again firmly refused to consider this. The group decided to alert CINCEUR and CINCSTRIKE in regard to a possible deployment to Ascension. Lt. Col. Dunn phoned Gen. Dougherty at CINCEUR with the alert and the JCS followed at 2136Z with a formal message. This was an example of the utility in having a JCS action officer sit in on the high level decision makers' meetings, since it permitted him to get the information he needed at once, instead of waiting for it to trickle down through channels, and so begin the process of alerting as quickly as possible. In this case the phone call gained three and one-half hours extra warning for CINCEUR.

CINCEUR was also told to prepare a cover plan for the possible deployment.

[114. State notified the Brussels Embassy late that same afternoon to tell Spaak that the U.S. attached the greatest importance to U.S.-Belgian cooperation, and were therefore alerting the C-130s for the 17th. Before giving final approval, however, the U.S.] R

[Government would like assurance that the following points had been fully considered:] R

[a. The possibility that the movement, clearances, etc. might cause an information leak and thereby prejudice the element of surprise and increase the risk to the hostages. Furthermore, the possibility of a security leak might increase as the gap between force deployment from Europe and its possible employment grew wider. In regard to this point, State suggested privately to MacArthur that the later the force was prepositioned at a forward base, the less time there would be for a leak to precipitate a situation which might force implementation of the plan. R

b. In view of the latest VDW schedule, might there be any advantage in deferring deployment a couple of days. R

c. If the risks of detection were acceptable, though still great, whether to preposition at Kamina rather than Ascension and thus reduce the lead time from (Ascension to Stanleyville) 21 to 3 hours. R

d. If the risks of detection were too great, whether to preposition the whole force at Kleine-Brogel with U.S. aircraft on the ground and the paratroops ready for immediate departure. This would cut out the twelve-hour alerting period currently allowed the paratroops. R

e. What the effects of a drop on Stanleyville might be on the smaller pockets of hostages and how the Belgians saw the problem of helping them. R

f. What plans the Belgians had for a cover story.] R

[MacArthur was to reassert that prepositioning alone did not mean that the decision to implement would necessarily follow.] R

[Godley in Leo was heard from at this time, urging the deployment to Ascension or even to Kamina if security risks were] R

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considered acceptable. He reported that he and DeKerchove, the Belgian Ambassador, had informed VDW of the contingency planning and that the latter had been pleased with the news, provided the force could be prepositioned on Ascension. Otherwise he felt it was all not worth the effort. VDW also expressed concern over the hostages at Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa, especially after he captured Stanleyville. He claimed that to effect a rescue in these three places he would need an airdrop capability for all three on a twelve hour notice.

At 3:00 A.M. local time in Brussels, the Ambassador reported back to State on the Belgian reaction to the cautionary telegram. He had met with Spaak and his aides and their opinions were as follows:

a. The Belgians saw no virtue in delaying the deployment a couple of days. In order to coordinate with VDW who was now definitely planning to kick off on the 19th (from Kindu 250 miles south of Stanleyville), deployment of the paratroops beginning on the 17th would mean that the force would all be in position, rested, and refueled and ready to go on by the 19th when the period of greatest peril to the hostages would begin.

b. Spaak felt it would be a major error to preposition at Kamina rather than Ascension, since the presence of the force at Kamina would increase the pressure to commit them prematurely.

c. Prepositioning on the field at Kleine-Brogel made no sense. The poor weather over Belgium at this time of the year could prevent take-off at desired time; security would be impossible to maintain; the virtually continuous deployment from Kleine-Brogel to Stanleyville would be exhausting to the force.

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[REDACTED]

d. Spaak expressed his concern over the outlying pockets of foreigners in the Congo and indicated Belgian planning in this regard was underway.

The U.S. accepted Spaak's position on all points. CINCEUR planners were ordered to Brussels for follow-up operations, and at a State/Defense group meeting during the early afternoon of the 16th, the decision was taken to deploy to Ascension. The JCS so ordered CINCEUR at 1932Z, instructing him to execute that portion of DRAGON ROUGE on the 17th necessary to position the force on Ascension. Assault aircraft and paratroop commanders were to be given the latest intelligence on the Stanleyville area on arrival on the island.

Curiously, Ambassador Godley in Leo disagreed early on the 16th with the deployment to Ascension on the 17th, claiming that since by joint U.S. and Belgian estimate the 23rd would be the critical day for the hostages, deployment should be deferred until the 20th. Presumably he feared the consequences of a premature deployment for which the risk of security compromise would be very high. Godley also pointed out that the difference between prepositioning at Kamina instead of Ascension would not reduce the time to Stanleyville to three hours, since seven hours more were needed for refueling with inadequate equipment.

The decision to deploy on the 17th having been made, there arose two problems. One concerned the cover story to avoid early publicity which might compromise the operation. The other was a logistic problem that arose through the decision to preposition for an indeterminate number of days on a small island.

The subject of a cover story had arisen early in consideration of DRAGON ROUGE but didn't become important until the first deployment was decided upon. Initially, the U.S. felt that the

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cover plan should be a Belgian responsibility. The cover for movement of U.S. aircraft would present no problem. The problem lay in the paratroops. In a country as small as Belgium, the movement of the elite military unit would be impossible to conceal, especially since the paracommandos provided the guard at the royal palace in Brussels.

The two chief difficulties were that: there was no pattern of combined U.S.-Belgian airborne exercises which might serve as a cover for alerting and loading Belgian troops aboard U.S. aircraft; the peacetime movement of military aircraft within Europe, without specific diplomatic clearance is limited to NATO-associated military activities. Movement of DRAGON ROUGE aircraft was not possible without political cognizance and approval of the countries involved.

CINCEUR suggested a simple plan to the JCS on the afternoon of the 16th. Maximum use would be made of darkness in augmenting and staging flights. In the event any questions were asked, the basic story was to be that this was a combined U.S.-Belgian no-notice strategic mobility exercise, done within the NATO framework, the details of which were classified. No personnel in the operation, except on a need-to-know basis, would be told the nature of the operation until ready to depart for Ascension.

[The State Department, however, proposed to Ambassador MacArthur that evening a different and much more elaborate cover plan. The basic difference with the CINCEUR plan was that State proposed that the Belgian paratroop cover story and the U.S. airlift cover story be completely unrelated. In regard to the paratroop move, State suggested that the British be asked to send six or more RAF transport planes to land at and depart from Kleine-Brogel in daylight hours preceding the deployment, in order to lay]

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[the basis for a story of a joint Belgian-British European exercise. If time were too short to permit the British cover flights, the story should still be used. Details for this should be worked out between the Belgians and the British directly. As for the aircraft, false flight filings should be made for them, and maximum security instituted at the Spanish bases.] R

CINCEUR's reaction to this State proposal was negative on the grounds that it was both too complicated and too late. Flight plans had already been filed, but political clearances had not yet been received. [Furthermore, false flight clearances could not be filed without at the same time filing true flight plans for the actual routes. Air traffic congestion over Europe and the safety of the U.S. and other aircraft demanded that valid flight plans be acted upon by air traffic control agencies. The timing and processing of valid flight clearances was becoming crucial.] This was at 1350Z on the 17th. However, the JCS at 1759Z directed CINCEUR to make necessary arrangements [with the British] to effect the cover plan, and declared that the State cover plan would be effective from Kleine-Brogel on. R

Nevertheless, there simply was not time enough to put the State scheme into operation. Mission decision was received only a few hours before mission execution was required. The few hours available were insufficient to effect the elaborate coordination that would have been necessary. [The British planes did not fly into Belgium.] [Ambassadorial approaches to the French and Spanish governments for diplomatic clearances were not made until too late to meet required mission timing. Aircraft had to be launched from Evreux on normal flight plans before French concurrence was received. Spanish concurrence was received only shortly before the first C-130 penetrated Spanish airspace.] Since it was necessary R

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that the aircraft land at Ascension during daylight hours, CINCEUR directed CINCUSAFE at 1513Z to proceed with the flights according to plan, despite the fact that none of the clearances involved in the State plan had been received. The existence of the conflicting plans and the last-minute JCS instruction [not to proceed until the fictitious flight plans had been filed] resulted in confusion R and a delay in take-off from Kleine-Brogel.

The State plan might have been more successful if planning for a cover scheme had been undertaken concurrently with planning for the operation itself. By leaving the cover plan undecided until the last minute, the chances for its successful operation were doomed through lack of time.

As it turned out, the Belgian press on the 17th carried a report of Belgian paratroops going to the Congo to rescue hostages. The Belgian government at first refused to comment and then finally denied that there was any truth in the report. Neither tactic silenced speculation.

The logistic problem of Ascension was taken in hand on the 15th. The island, an almost bare rock of thirty-four square miles, little rainfall, a tiny British population and a handful of Americans at an Atlantic Missile Range station, was to become host to 650 visitors. CINCEUR notified CINCUSAREUR on the 15th that the capability of the island to support the force was unknown, and directed him to find out what was available and what was needed to support a force under austere accommodations for possibly four to five days. The U.S. should be prepared to supply what it could. CINCUSAFE similarly notified Andrews Air Force Base Supply Center to be prepared to help with food, tents, and fuel.

With the cooperation of the local residents, the U.S. was able to supply most of the necessities by the time the force was fully landed. For the first night the assault troops lacked cots and tents, but these were soon provided the troops, and good weather assisted in the logistic-administrative effort.

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C. COORDINATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The DRAGON ROUGE operation was unusual in that its execution involved no less than six governments. An American airlift force normally stationed in France picked up a Belgian force and flew it via two Spanish bases to a British island from which it was launched into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. R

The first government, apart from the two principals, to become involved was the British, and this came about in a very curious fashion. On November 12, apparently in a move quite independent of and without knowledge of the U.S.-Belgian planning then underway, the British in Brussels approached the Belgian Government to express a willingness to undertake a unilateral British military intervention to rescue the hostages. It would appear that the idea originated with the British ambassador in Leopoldville and received Foreign Office support. The British military had available one or two airborne battalions for the job. The British ambassadors in Leopoldville and Washington had simultaneously raised the matter with the Embassy in Leopoldville and with the Department in Washington. R

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MacArthur told the Belgians they could brief the British on a very closely held basis, since it was evident that the use of Ascension would shortly have to be raised with the British anyway. R

An explanation for the British reversal was offered by MacArthur to the effect that original British proposal had not

[redacted] received ministerial approval but represented enthusiasm in both the Foreign Office and the military. However, he felt the British wished the U.S.-Belgian operation well and were just as glad to have no political responsibility for it. R

The general U.S. attitude was to discuss the subject with the British only on their initiative, until we were ready to raise the subject of Ascension. The U.S. Element, U.S./U.K. Planning Group, in the London Embassy was cautioned by JCS/CINCSSTRIKE not to discuss Congo planning, and especially not to discuss U.S. unilateral plans or any indication that the U.S. was or would commit U.S. ground forces. The U.S. Element has sought guidance on the 12th for an informal response to a British request to determine the possibility of coordinating Congo evacuation plans with the U.S. and of coordination of any possible U.S./U.K. military actions should intervention become necessary. R

When, however, the U.S. did request the right to land the DRAGON ROUGE force on Ascension, approval was immediately given and British cooperation was wholehearted. When it became evident that the force would have to remain on the island for several days, the British gave all the administrative support within their capability, to the extent of creating a communications blackout on the island to prevent possible revelation of the presence of this force. R

British cooperation extended to the political realm as well. British ambassadors in several key African countries were instructed to explain the situation to their host governments in order to buttress the American position in the event the DRAGON ROUGE were implemented. R

Furthermore, the British dispatched two RAF transports to Nairobi to stand by for the evacuation of Britishers from [redacted] P

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Stanleyville. These two aircraft flew into Stanleyville on the 25th and assisted in the evacuation. R

Dealings with the French were left by the U.S. to the Belgians. At State Department direction, discreet French inquiries to the U.S. Embassy in Paris were referred to the Belgians, and while the U.S. relied on the Belgians to keep the French briefed and to arrange for flight clearances, we did not encourage the Belgians to discuss contingency planning. There was, of course, no problem in arranging flight clearances for the C-130Es stationed at Evreux. R

On November 16 Spaak went to Bonn for a meeting of the Western European Union and while there presumably, with U.S. consent, informed the Germans and others that Belgium might have to intervene. This was designed to condition their minds in the event that their political support would be needed later. R

On the 16th State directed the Embassy in Madrid to request Spanish cooperation in regard to overflights, the arranged cover story, and security. As a result of a misunderstanding, there ensued a slight delay in the receipt of these requested rights, but the permission of the Spanish Government was eventually received at the last minute. In the actual flight, the C-130s carrying the paratroops overflew Los Palmas, but the cargo-carrying C-124s had to land there to refuel. R

However, when on the 22nd a squadron of C-130s was sent from the U.S. to Moron to stand by for emergency purposes, the move was made without proper clearance. As a result the Spanish Government was aggravated and refused overflight rights to the DRAGON ROUGE force on its return trip to Belgium. R

D. PLANNING FOR FOLLOW-ON OPERATIONS

Spaak indicated his concern to Ambassador MacArthur on the 16th about the small pockets of non-Congolese scattered elsewhere in rebel-held territory outside of the Stanleyville area. These people were mostly Belgians with a large number of Greeks as well as assorted foreigners, including a few Americans. The Belgians apparently had in mind the need for planning for various small operations at Bunia, Paulis and Watsa, essentially for special air drops. Belgian planning was not very advanced and Spaak expressed the need of the Belgian planners to talk with their American counterparts.

The JCS that same day notified CINCEUR of the Belgian interest and directed him to be prepared on short notice and at the request of the U.S. Ambassador in Brussels to send planners for a new round of talks. The next day CINCSTRIKE was requested to send one planner to Brussels to participate in the planning, and he was further directed to report to the JCS upon his return. The STRIKE officer arrived in Brussels on the 18th and joined Brigadier General Dougherty and Lt. Col. Gray of EUCOM, two of the original DRAGON ROUGE planners.

[Instructions for the planners from the JCS specified that there be no reference made to U.S. unilateral plans nor to any indication that the U.S. was planning to or would commit U.S. ground forces in the Congo.] Every effort was to be made to ensure that the Belgian planning provided for the expeditious rescue and evacuation of American hostages. Details for the withdrawal of the DRAGON ROUGE force in the U.S. aircraft were to be worked out. Lastly, the planners were told that they could plan operations, as desired by the Belgians, for the rescue or protection of foreigners in areas such as Bunia, Paulis, and

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Watsa. It was to be understood that this planning would not commit the U.S. to the provision or employment of U.S. forces in these operations.

The extreme caution of the U.S. policy makers was evident in these terms of reference. No commitments were to be made until the need became evident. As with the DRAGON ROUGE conference, commitments were to planning only, with decisions to be taken as circumstances directed, on a step-by-step basis.

In their preliminary planning, the Belgians had placed priority on Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa in that sequence. Priorities were changed after the DRAGON ROUGE had been executed, because the hostages had been moved about and there was some hope of cutting off rebel leaders. The combined planners developed three draft plans by the 20th to secure the airfields in Bunia and Paulis and to secure the city of Watsa, and to liberate and to evacuate the hostages therein. The plans, with their objective and approximate date of execution in terms of days after the Stanleyville drop were:

DRAGON BLANC-- Bunia	-D+2
DRAGON NOIR-- Paulis	-D+4
DRAGON VERT-- Watsa	-no specific date set

One company of paratroops was to be dropped into each objective to seize and secure for the aircraft to land. Watsa presented a special problem. The airfield there could not accommodate C-130E aircraft, so an airdrop only was called for. The planning concept considered that the city would be held until trucks landed at Bunia by air could reach Watsa and evacuate both the hostages and the paratroopers.

The plans were so written that in an emergency there could be simultaneous drops, instead of a sequential arrangement.

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They were designed to be flexible enough to cover fears the CJCS had expressed that if for some reason DRAGON ROUGE were to be cancelled, the three smaller operations could be carried out.

Once U.S.-Belgian approval to execute had been given, the decision to launch would be on an in-country basis by agreement of the U.S. and Belgian force commanders.

Most of the discussion at the planning conference concerned logistic problems such as the critical need for a new batch of personnel parachutes as well as equipment parachutes for dropping heavier gear at Watsa. The problem essentially was ascertaining what equipment was available in-country and what was needed. The needed parachutes were flown to Kamina from Belgium by U.S. planes, along with additional needed equipment.

The problem of redeployment of the paratroops to Belgium was not specifically resolved. The Supplemental Plan stated that definitive planning schedule could not be made due to the uncertainties of operations and requirements. However, a concept for redeployment to Belgium was agreed. In-country recovery would first be to Kamina where the force could be held with minimum adverse political effect and exposure to urban areas. This in-country recovery would be effected by JTF Leo, upon request of the paratroop commander and following the liberation and evacuation of hostages, from whatever dispersed areas the battalion had entered. Once the battalion elements were all concentrated at Kamina, airlift to Belgium for the paratrooper personnel would, where possible, be by Sabena charter flight. U.S. tactical airlift would be required to recover the battalion equipment not readily transportable by commercial charter.

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The redeployment of equipment would commence on request of the Belgian Government, and would require an estimated sixteen C-130E sorties for recovery and redeployment of all vehicles and parachutes.

It is not known why the JCS instructions to plan a withdrawal of the DRAGON force in the U.S. airlift were not followed.

CINCEUR's Supplemental OPLAN 319/64 was sent to the JCS on the 21st and approved on the 23rd for planning purposes. With approval went a caution to CINCSRIKE to ensure that in-country planning included tactical air cover as for the DRAGON ROUGE plan.

The STRIKE planner left Brussels on the 20th and briefed the Joint Staff as directed. He went to the State Department in the company of the CJCS and briefed him en route. However, the planner did not sit in on the State/Defense meeting nor did he brief the State people. The CJCS did not read or take the copy of the Supplemental Plan to the meeting with him. Presumably at this date all efforts were being devoted to the first and key decision, that to launch or not to launch DRAGON ROUGE.

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IV. DECISION MAKING: STEP TWO

The four days following the deployment to Ascension were marked by a continuing confusion and contradiction of motives and objectives. There was a sudden expansion of political activity, while the military force, ready and poised, remained on Ascension on short alert. The only really significant military step in this period had been ordered even before the DRAGON ROUGE force landed on Ascension, when late on the 16th the JCS directed CINCEUR to deploy a refueling unit, stripped of all U.S. markings, and personnel to Kamina. The DRAGON ROUGE Plan had provided for the deployment of refuelers prior to force commitment, but with the change in timing from a single movement into the Congo to a step-by-step advance, it became necessary to preposition the equipment. Thus the last logistic barriers to a rapid move to Stanleyville were being erased.

The political activity that developed was multifaceted. There were efforts to ameliorate the situation of the hostages by diplomatic appeals to the rebels, which culminated in negotiations with them; there was the difficult problem of informing the GDRC of DRAGON ROUGE and of obtaining not merely written concurrence but approval by the GDRC; there was the effort of the U.S. to take the problem to the U.N. During all these maneuvers, the clock kept ticking and the unresolved issue of DRAGON ROUGE objectives and the relationship to VDW continued to press on decision makers. Surrounding and inspiring these efforts were the increasingly strident threats to the hostages emanating from the rebels in Stanleyville.

In this account of the weighing and reweighing of conflicting considerations during this period, an essentially

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chronological rather than a topical treatment was used to re-create the multiple and concurrent pressures felt by the decision makers. What might be lost in clarity of presentation through an essentially topical approach is more than compensated for by the retention of a sense of harsh and confused reality in the chronological approach.

A. POLITICAL MANEUVERS

Coordination with the GDRC

Now that the next step forward for DRAGON ROUGE would bring it into the Congo, it became imperative that the GDRC be informed to some degree of what might happen. Spaak took the initiative by requesting his Ambassador DeKerchove in Leo on the 17th to see Premier Tshombe the next day, after consulting Godley, and to lift the veil on DRAGON ROUGE in a general way. Spaak felt that before DRAGON ROUGE could be implemented, it was essential to have "something in writing" from Tshombe [to cover the U.S. and Belgium politically, and he instructed DeKerchove to obtain Tshombe's agreement in writing to any intervention that might have to be made for purely humanitarian ends. He was to give Tshombe no indication of the nature of preparatory measures taken, but only] to inform the Premier that measures existed. DeKerchove might, if he felt it more appropriate, delay his approach to Tshombe until the 19th or 20th. R

Finally, the Belgian ambassador was to stress that the purpose of an intervention would be the rescue of the hostages [and not the facilitating of the ANC ground operations. This last point, as will be discussed later, was essentially unrealistic and Spaak was aware of it. While the purpose of DRAGON ROUGE was humanitarian, its effect was bound to assist the ANC ground advance.] The interrelationships of cause and

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effect between VDW's advance and DRAGON ROUGE came through in every aspect of the situation. In terms of international opinion, it was futile to expect any distinction to be drawn between purpose and result.

The next day, the 18th, State wired instructions [to MacArthur, outlining the preferred American approach to the GDRC.] The U.S. was convinced that it and Belgium, in order to minimize adverse reaction when news that DRAGON ROUGE was under consideration became public, must preposition suitable requests for U.S.-Belgian aid which, when revealed, would put the operation in the best light. Because of his greater acceptance in Africa, the approach was to be made to President Kasavubu by the two ambassadors in Leo. [No details of DRAGON ROUGE were to be revealed, and it was to be made clear that the action requested of Kasavubu did not in any sense prejudice any prior U.S. or Belgian decision to give assistance.]

The ambassadors were to ask for undated signed letters to Spaak asking for the dispatch of paratroops to Stanleyville and to President Johnson for U.S. support of the Belgian expedition. The ambassadors were to reach agreement with Kasavubu that if DRAGON ROUGE were to be implemented, the two letters would be dated and published. There was a critical need for such letters since [the Department felt that] both the U.S. and Belgium would be exposed to charges of aggression. In addition, Kasavubu should agree to issue a public statement when the letters were published by the U.S. and Belgium. Lastly, the Congolese President should preposition with the Congo U.N. delegation in New York a letter to the U.N. Secretary General, containing his requests for assistance.

A proposed text of Kasavubu's public statement was sent along with these instructions.

[Within a few hours the Department had Spaak's news on their proposed approach. Spaak disagreed with the idea of letters to himself and to President Johnson on the grounds that they made the State scheme too elaborate. He strongly urged the operation be kept as simple as possible, or it would become feasible for the Congolese to start adding conditions. It was preferable to act on just the Kasavubu public statement and the letter to the U.N. Secretary General. Spaak's recurrent theme was that the simpler the operation, the easier it would be.] R

[The State Department, however, refused to relinquish its position. They replied the next day that, while agreeing with Spaak's views on simplicity, the U.S. still intended to request a letter from Kasavubu to the U.S. Government, after he had agreed to make a public declaration and after the undated signed letter to the U.N. Secretary General was in American hands. The last three words were underscored. It was hoped that the Belgians would do the same.] P

[Some modification of the U.S. position did occur in response to the Belgian objections.] Instead of asking Kasavubu for a letter to President Johnson, it was decided that a letter to Ambassador Godley, requesting U.S. assistance, was acceptable. The American stand succeeded [and very late on the 20th DeKerchove and Godley saw Tshombe and] told him something of DRAGON ROUGE and the requirement for the documents. He agreed and [both ambassadors recommended to their respective Governments that, if the letters upon receipt proved to be satisfactory,] the DRAGON ROUGE force be advanced immediately to Kamina. Spaak concurred with the recommendation. Early the next morning Godley reported he had received the three documents from Tshombe. R P

Thus the political buttresses for the American-Belgian position were secured. However, at the very same time

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relationships with the GDRC, and with the Belgians, were somewhat rasped by an American political initiative undertaken to provide further political strengthening of the Allied case. This involved a direct approach to the rebels.

Negotiations with the Rebels

Virtually since the fall of Stanleyville to the rebels, there had been continuous political efforts by the U.S. and other friendly powers to mitigate the situation of the hostages, if not actually to guarantee their safety. Most of this effort revolved around attempts to persuade the rebel leaders to permit representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to go to Stanleyville in order to investigate the condition of the hostages. ICRC representatives had earlier been permitted to make one brief visit to the city, but they were unable to accomplish anything. All attempts to repeat the visit had been persistently blocked by the rebel leaders.

This effort was combined with a broader one designed to achieve a peaceful settlement between the GDRC and the rebels. Godley approached Tshombe on the 16th, suggesting a new appeal to the rebels to lay down their arms. This was obviously a diplomatic ploy designed primarily to protect the hostages, but there was apparently some belief in the State Department that a diplomatic and political solution to the hostage problem might be found as part of a broader settlement of the Congo problem. Godley supplied Tshombe with a suggested text for the appeal and stressed the importance the U.S. laid upon it. Godley also sent to State a suggested text for an appeal by Secretary Rusk to Premier Kenyatta of Kenya, the President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

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Ad Hoc Commission on the Congo. This appeal was specifically aimed at achieving Kenyatta's intervention to save the life of Doctor Paul Carlson, an American medical missionary who had just been condemned to death by the rebels in Stanleyville. The appeal was delivered on the 16th and allowed Kenyatta the opportunity to inject himself into the situation where his interests were obviously radically different from those of the U.S.

The next day the American consul in Bujumbura (Burundi) reported that the rebel leader, Gbenye, was said to be willing to consider "an exchange of prisoners." While the consul considered the move an obvious bluff, he saw it as a possible means of delaying Carlson's execution, and proposed that Godley and the Department arrange to have Gbenye notified that a U.S. emissary was prepared to accompany an OAU mission to Stanleyville to discuss his proposals.

In response to Gbenye's request, a message was prepared for Godley by State to be sent Gbenye immediately, stating that the U.S. was prepared at any time for discussions, and inviting Gbenye to name place, time, and person. The message also requested that Gbenye provide U.S. Consul Hoyt in Stanleyville a communications channel so we could have some independent ability to talk to him in order to facilitate discussions.

State felt that the U.S. response should be open minded to see what the rebels really intended. It was clear that since there were no POWs to exchange, the rebels were probably aiming at a cease fire as the price of safety for the hostages.

State indicated to both Godley and MacArthur on the 19th that the instructions to the U.S. representative,

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J. Wayne Fredericks, called for a tough stand.¹ He was to show the rebels that in the light of their rapidly deteriorating military position, they had no alternative but a negotiated release of the prisoners. State declared it did not believe the negotiations would work, but felt they were worth a try and would, in addition, be useful for the public record.

State was willing to go very far in exploring the negotiations, however. In a message to MacArthur at 0315Z on the 20th, State sent a tentative rationale and guidelines for the Fredericks talks with Kanza and/or the OAU, subject to Belgian concurrence. Fredericks himself arrived in Brussels on the 19th to discuss the matter with the Belgians. The guidelines declared that the first objective of the Godley to Gbenye message emphasizing willingness to negotiate was to avoid the accusation that the U.S. was unwilling to respond to an initiative which could save the lives of U.S. citizens. The second objective, equally important, was to use confrontation with the rebels to test whether the rebels were ready to accept restoration of GDRC authority under terms which 1) would make unnecessary the invasion of Stanleyville; 2) would offer the prospect of extracting the hostages at minimal risk; 3) could be imposed on the GDRC by concerted U.S.-Belgian pressures; and 4) would help rehabilitate U.S.-OAU relations.

While the primary effort was to bring about rebel acceptance of a restoration of GDRC authority which would make a military solution unnecessary, the message stressed that State did not envisage the initiative as replacing present

¹ Fredericks was Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. He was en route to East Africa on other business and was authorized to make the initial contact with the rebels. This was apparently because of an earlier personal acquaintance with Gbenye.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

military efforts, and reaffirmed State's belief that only the credible threat of GDRC capability and will to decapitate the rebellion by military means could predispose the rebels to end hostilities under acceptable terms. State recognized that the rebels would seek delaying action in hopes of outside aid, and so a hard line should be adopted, with proposals put on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

The political deal to be proposed would include a GDRC guarantee of personal safety, political amnesty, and the right to hold office. If the rebels indicated any interest, the U.S. was prepared to offer, in concert with the Belgians and possibly OAU, a major effort to win GDRC acceptance and to examine the possibility of some form of neutral presence (Belgian-U.S.-OAU) in Stanleyville to assure order during GDRC takeover and that other undertakings were fulfilled. This might even include token forces, hopefully from the OAU, though possibly even U.S.-Belgian with OAU blessing.

State recognized that the keystone to the whole enterprise would be a U.S.-Belgian concerted demarche to the GDRC in the event the rebels seemed to be forthcoming in a meaningful sense. The U.S. and Belgium would have to be prepared clearly to indicate that present and future relations with the Congo were in jeopardy unless the GDRC were willing to end hostilities under the settlement terms suggested above. The initial U.S. objective would thus be to gain Belgian agreement that both governments were prepared to consider such a deal seriously, including heavy pressure on the GDRC, if the exploration of issues with the rebels so warranted.

State concluded by reasserting that it believed that this final effort was absolutely essential to building an

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irrefutable record of U.S.-Belgian attempts to gain a political settlement as well as being one final effort to secure the safety of the hostages short of a perilous military solution. Nor did State entirely discount the possibility that even at that late date such a maneuver might work. There had never been any illusions that a political deal could be consummated except at a point where all possible alternatives to the rebels had been slammed shut. State obviously felt that that time had now arrived and it was thus crucial to try to test the rebel response.

With this message the whole issue of U.S. negotiations with the rebels seemed to acquire proportions greater than it merited. The original limited objective seemed to be superseded by the broader one, the political settlement of the whole Congo situation. The original purpose of the response to Gbenye had been to make a public record, to hang on to whatever faint hope there was of a capitulation settlement, and to keep contact with the rebels alive during the next few days when they would be growing increasingly desperate as the trap closed on Stanleyville. It would appear that what was originally thought of as a tactical measure quickly assumed a strategic objective nature in the estimate of those desiring desperately to avoid having to implement DRAGON ROUGE.

From the very start the Belgian reaction was completely negative. A detailed report of a conversation on November 7 in Dar es Salaam between the Belgian Charge' and the rebel envoy-at-large, Kanza, had made it clear to Spaak that the rebels were playing for time, in anticipation of the receipt of concrete assistance in the form of an early airlift of military equipment from Communist China and Algeria, as well

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as possible diplomatic recognition of the Stanleyville regime by certain African countries. When MacArthur on the 20th told Spaak's deputy, Davignon, of the U.S. follow-up of Gbenye's proposal, the Belgian declared his opposition, saying flatly that it would confuse the whole situation as far as the Congolese were concerned. He was shocked at the terms of reference that had been given Fredericks, and felt neither Kasavubu nor Tshombe would go along with the scheme. Neither of them, he was certain, would accept equating the GDRC and the rebels and the making of a deal at their expense. Also, they were unlikely to halt the advance of the ANC and the mercenaries, and could push on to Stanleyville whether we liked it or not. He also drew the attention of the Americans to the message sent by Kenyatta to the U.N. Secretary General in which the Premier of Kenya totally reversed the position taken by the OAU at the Addis Ababa meeting upholding the sovereignty and authority of the GDRC. Kenyatta now equated the rebels and the GDRC and called for the end of assistance by "Tshombe's supporters outside Africa." To work out a deal along the lines of Fredericks' guidelines would give full justification to those who equated the two and who believed that the operations of the ANC to restore the legal authority of the government had been all along controlled by Belgium and the U.S.

Davignon stated also that Spaak felt that we should do nothing to give credence by our actions to the theory that innocent foreign residents of a country can be used internationally to extract major political concessions. The position that political settlements are independent from the question of foreign hostages should be maintained and we should not link them by our actions.

[REDACTED]

At a meeting with Spaak himself later in the day, MacArthur received the same response. Spaak thought the Fredericks' mission a terrible mistake and dissociated Belgium from it. He would not object to U.S. talks with the rebels about hostages but warned against linking political questions such as a cease fire. He said it was inevitable that the rebels would make a cease fire quid pro quo for the safety of the hostages, so that the U.S. would find itself in the position of damaging the GDRC. Furthermore, we could not support a cease fire. The GDRC would be sure to refuse and then the U.S. would be compelled to back the rebels against the GDRC. Finally, Spaak felt the timing was too late. VDW was too close to Stanleyville, and negotiations and the necessary communications to Stanleyville could not come to pass before VDW arrived. Spaak also suggested deployments to Kamina the next day since his con-suming fear was that as rebel leaders left the city, the danger to the hostages would increase, and he had just received reports of such departures.

[Godley and the whole Leo country team] concurred with Spaak's point of view on negotiations, and warned of the possibility that the U.S. might fall into a trap. R

The same evening, the 20th, MacArthur and Fredericks met again with Spaak, and Fredericks defended the negotiations, stating that the U.S. would not arbitrarily negotiate a cease fire. Spaak dismissed the negotiations as useless and impossible without GDRC agreement. Fredericks replied that U.S. and Belgium should put pressure on the GDRC, if necessary, since there would be a tremendous adverse reaction if we implemented DRAGON ROUGE. We needed, consequently, every proof that we had tried for a peaceful solution. Washington believed no stone should be left unturned.

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The Belgian Foreign Minister rejected these arguments. His position was that we should not allow the rebels a breather or a break, or other countries would have time to increase their support to the rebels. VDW was the only chance, apart from DRAGON ROUGE, to end the business and to save the hostages.

However, State still believed that its objectives were much more limited than the Belgians seemed to fear they were. State on the 20th notified the Ambassador in Nairobi, Kenya, Mr. Attwood, who had now been delegated to conduct the negotiations, of what the U.S. objectives were. They were: to avoid a public stance of rebuffing an offer to negotiate; to buy time which might permit VDW to reach Stanleyville without the need for DRAGON ROUGE; and to explore every possible means of peaceful resolution of the hostage problem. Attwood was to tell the rebels, in an apparent change in U.S. position, that he could not discuss a cease fire. Furthermore, the U.S. agreed now with Spaak that the VDW columns should not be halted during the discussion, although the U.S. had earlier endeavored to call such a pause.

Proof of the reaction from the GDRC came late on the 20th when Godley reported that Tshombe had complained bitterly about the negotiations and Spaak's public statement of the day announcing the presence of the paratroops on Ascension. Tshombe and Kasavubu were both reported to feel they had been pushed around by the Americans and Belgians. Rumors of an American double-cross in negotiating with the rebels were circulating. Godley also reported that VDW had not halted his columns as the U.S. had requested earlier.

On the same day the U.S. initiated another diplomatic effort with a joint appeal by the U.S., Belgium, Canada, and

the United Kingdom to India to use her good offices in aiding the hostages.

The Initiative in the U.N.

Not only had the U.S. roiled the waters with these diplomatic moves, but on the 20th another initiative was suggested that added further confusion. All this was happening, it should be recalled, against a backdrop of continuous deliberation over the purpose of DRAGON ROUGE and its relationship to VDW, plus the oscillating threats from Stanleyville.

The latest U.S. political suggestion was that the U.S. and Belgium call for a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council in order to preempt those who might call a meeting and put the U.S. and Belgium on the defensive. The Belgian Government had formally announced on that day the presence of the DRAGON ROUGE force on Ascension. U.N. Secretary General Thant had been questioned by the press immediately on his reaction, and had stated that such an action might be a cause for U.N. action in the Security Council. Possibly this raised the worst fears of the State Department. As it turned out, the next day Thant denied that his statement meant what it had been interpreted to mean, claiming that the U.S.-Belgian action alone did not constitute grounds for U.N. action. The Security Council would become involved only if there were a threat to peace arising in the Congo. Nevertheless, it is possible that the U.S. initiative was inspired by Thant's comment. [Godley objected immediately on the grounds that he had as yet (noon on the 21st) none of the needed signatures on the letters,] and that any initiative in the U.N. must be a coordinated U.S.-Belgium-GDRC affair. To do otherwise would be dangerous in the extreme. Furthermore, he did not believe any action in the U.N. could create pressures on the rebels to release the prisoners.

[REDACTED]

Spaak similarly opposed the idea, feeling the risks would greatly outweigh the advantages. The Security Council would almost inevitably demand a cease-fire and a halt to VDW's advance, while, on the other hand, it could not similarly compel the rebels to release the prisoners.

B. VDW AND DRAGON ROUGE

The agonizing over the true mission of DRAGON ROUGE went on through all the political maneuvering. This, in fact, was the chief problem for decision, since it involved within its compass the issues of whether DRAGON ROUGE should be implemented and if so, when. By the 18th the State Department had distilled its thinking and could ask five questions in regard to the mission:

a. Is it strictly a limited evacuation mission for the Stanleyville area (serving notice on the GDRC that it was up to them to move in and secure after we move out)?

b. Does DRAGON ROUGE attempt to secure and hold until VDW arrives, thus becoming de facto a military occupation on behalf of the GDRC?

c. Does it take out some Congolese [also in order not to be just a "white man's" rescue?] R

d. Will DRAGON ROUGE have to move out from Stanleyville and secure other main towns in the northeast Congo in order to protect the several hundred Europeans and Americans outside Stanleyville?

e. If not required prior to VDW's move, should DRAGON ROUGE be used as a supplement to VDW's attack in order to add an additional capability to secure the hostages' safety at that time?

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Until this, past thinking had apparently focussed on the VDW-DRAGON ROUGE relationship from the point of view of a coordinated pair of operations. Now, however, a new dimension appeared. State wired MacArthur on the 17th that the need might arise for VDW to attack before his scheduled kickoff date if DRAGON ROUGE were implemented in response to an emergency. MacArthur was asked to have the two ambassadors in Leo and the Belgians encourage VDW to plan for an emergency, unscheduled rush to reach Stanleyville and to support the paratroop drop.

The Belgians agreed that VDW should think also in terms of reaction to DRAGON ROUGE, rather than the reverse. They suspected he had not thought in these terms. It had been made clear to him that DRAGON ROUGE was not just an adjunct to his operations and would be carried out independently. Consequently, they would urge him to plan for this eventuality as well as ask him to begin planning possible follow up missions to get ground columns to the three towns selected for DRAGONS NOIR, BLANC, and VERT before the rebels could retake them.

VDW's response was that no contingency planning was required to speed up his column if DRAGON ROUGE were implemented in a sudden emergency. His current plan of operations was for the fastest move possible anyway.

Another aspect of this problem was raised by Godley on the 19th. He pointed out that under the present Belgian go/no-go procedures the go-ahead would come from VDW on the basis of his estimate of when he would reach Stanleyville. Godley suggested [that he and DeKerchove] might possibly secure information from other sources indicating imminent peril to the hostages, or could possibly lose communication with VDW. In either case [he and DeKerchove would jointly] recommend to Washington to go

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The underlying dilemma in the whole DRAGON ROUGE operation was raised [by the proposed Kasavubu letters.] Godley analyzed it on the 18th by drawing the distinction between: 1) the humanitarian paratroop drop to evacuate foreigners and then to leave whether or not ANC control had been established (the assumption, as he read it, upon which the plan was written);-or-on the other hand, 2) a humanitarian mission to rescue both foreigners and Congolese whose lives were in danger and then to turn Stanleyville over to GDRC authorities with foreign troops leaving immediately thereafter. The contradiction was illustrated by the Kasavubu letters. The one to the U.N. Secretary General stressed the short-term in-out nature of the operation, while Kasavubu's public declaration would emphasize the longer term nature, that the safety of the whole population of Stanleyville was a major consideration and that the DRAGON ROUGE force would stay until their safety was assured.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In short, there was a clash of interests -- Belgian, U.S., and Congolese. So long as foreign troops were to land in the Congo, irrespective of the nobility of their rescue mission, the interests and wishes of the GDRC simply could not be ignored.

Godley reasserted that the U.S. and Belgium should not bear the onus of leaving Stanleyville to the mercy of the rebels, and therefore recommended that the DRAGON ROUGE force remain in Stanleyville until VDW could effectively occupy the city. Certainly this was better than trying to airlift ANC forces in by commercial aircraft or in U.S. aircraft.

The suggestion had been made that the U.S. fly in some ANC paratroops along with the DRAGON force. Assistant Secretary of State Williams had supported the proposal, since part of the U.S. and Belgian defense rested upon rebel mistreatment of Congolese as well as non-Congolese. In addition, it would make DRAGON ROUGE less of a "lily-white" operation. The ANC paratroops would not leave with the Belgians but would wait for VDW, assuming he were on time. If not, the small size of the proposed Congo contingent would make it necessary to evacuate them along with the DRAGON force. Ambassador Palmer, apparently with general support in the State/Defense group, claimed that such a move would change the character of DRAGON ROUGE from "a snatch to an occupation," and the idea was dropped.

Another reason for retaining the DRAGON ROUGE force in Stanleyville a few days longer was the need for possible follow-up operations. VDW obviously could not immediately reach the other cities concerned after seizing Stanleyville, so any rescue hopes would have to be through paratroop drops on an in-out basis.

[REDACTED]

Godley warned that while the emphasis in the draft letters should be on the humanitarian aspects, and that operations were intended to save both white and Congolese lives, we must have answers ready to the points he had raised: would the DRAGON forces hold the city until VDW arrived; would they lift in the ANC; how much further would the DRAGON ROUGE forces want to go?

At this same time MacArthur in Brussels was reporting that Spaak opposed the suggestion that an ANC liaison officer go with the DRAGON ROUGE force, claiming it would be an invitation to the Congolese to urge the use of their paratroops, thus eliminating the humanitarian character of the operation and making it appear as part of the ANC operations. The confusion created by contradictory motivations and aspirations manifestly permeated all parties during this period.

Another element of concern was interjected by the rebels on the 20th when their radio in Stanleyville announced that the hostages had been moved from the city to other places of confinement. While the report was generally disbelieved by the Americans and Belgians on the grounds that the rebels were known not to have enough transport for such a removal, there always remained an outside possibility that the hostages were being dispersed, making any rescue operation immeasurably more difficult, if not impossible, within the limitations of the DRAGON ROUGE plan and its allotted forces.

It should be emphasized that there never was positive intelligence as to just where the hostages were being kept. Intelligence sources were highly uncertain, and air reconnaissance had been forbidden over the city.

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In an effort to resolve the fundamental dilemmas, a joint State/Defense message to CINCSTRIKE on the afternoon of the 20th proposed certain guidelines for DRAGON ROUGE.

a. The basic guidance was that intervention could be only for humanitarian cause. There was to be no question of merely assisting ANC operations.

b. Those persons wishing to leave Stanleyville would be evacuated, but no guarantee could be given for the safety of those who elect to remain after the DRAGON ROUGE force withdraws.

c. The mission was to be directed at evacuation only, upon completion of which the force would withdraw. The force would not remain in Stanleyville for the purpose of holding it till the ANC force arrives. For the sake of the public record, the force should be withdrawn prior to the arrival of VDW's ground column.

d. The force should evacuate up to 200 Congolese who wish to go, in order to avoid their suffering political reprisals, etc. [This action was also for the public record to show that not only whites were rescued.] *19*

e. If in the judgment of the DRAGON ROUGE force commander and/or the U.S.-Belgian Ambassadors in Leo, the VDW column would not be able to reach and secure Stanleyville, following the departure of the paratroops, soon enough to prevent rebel infiltration back into the city, Brussels and Washington should be notified. This notification should indicate how many hours the DRAGON ROUGE force would have to extend its stay in order to permit a timely ANC follow-on, and also a clear recommendation as to whether the DRAGON ROUGE force should be so extended.

f. DRAGON ROUGE aircraft would not lift any ANC forces or otherwise assist the ANC into Stanleyville, and no U.S.

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aircraft other than the DRAGON ROUGE aircraft were to land at Stanleyville during the period of DRAGON ROUGE occupation.

These guidelines remained in effect, provision e permitting a reasonable acceptance of the military inevitability of the relationship of VDW to DRAGON ROUGE.

The issue of evacuating Congolese arose again just prior to the assault when Tshombe requested that none be evacuated. His point was that useful people should be kept in the North-east Congo in order "to help reestablish order and the economy of the region". Godley asked State that the guidelines be amended accordingly, but heavy pressure from Assistant Secretary of State Williams blocked the move. Williams emphasized that the public interest demanded continuation of existing guidelines, [since a "lily-white" operation would be most harmful.]

C. MOVE TO KAMINA

The stage was now set for the deployment to Kamina. Early in the evening of the 20th, MacArthur reported that Spaak had requested the U.S. urgently to consider moving to Kamina either on the 21st or 22nd. The Belgian Joint Staff also asked the Ambassador to send a message to the Belgian paratroop commander on Ascension, which was in effect an alert warning regarding a possible move to Kamina. The Belgians therefore had obviously made up their minds. It was Spaak's position that as VDW approached the city, the rebel leaders would flee, leaving the murderous bands of Jeunesse¹ in control. Spaak emphasized that such a move would still not prejudice the decision.

¹The Jeunesse were the political strong arm in the rebel "organization" and, composed of boys as young as ten years, were noted for their viciousness.

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In a sense the move to Kamina was compelled by the news leak of the presence of the paratroops on Ascension. Unable to dissimulate any longer, Spaak publicly announced the fact on the 20th, stressing that the deployment of the force was purely precautionary and that nothing had been decided. The news could have three possible effects. It would likely increase the threat to the hostages as a result of the anger of the rebel leaders. It could incite a campaign by unfriendly African states and the Bloc to attempt to stop any impending operation through U.N. action. On the other hand, the news could be useful in the negotiations with the rebels as an indication that we meant business.

At any rate the two Ambassadors in Leo reported at 1525Z on the 21st that they were convinced that the hostages were now in dire jeopardy unless DRAGON ROUGE troops could land as soon as possible. The tenor of rebel messages had grown more vicious and, as Spaak feared, the rebel leaders were reported to be deserting the city to the Jeunesse. The ultimate in threat had been received in a rebel broadcast warning that the rebels "would devour the prisoners" if the city were attacked. This threat, so unbelievable in the middle of the Twentieth Century, had not before been stated so bluntly. To make the situation worse, VDW had been delayed in crossing the Luwa River. Consequently, Godley and DeKerchove urgently requested that, as soon as the GDRC provided the needed documentation, the decision be taken to launch DRAGON ROUGE.

The first State reaction to Spaak's request was cautious. The feeling was held that a deployment to Kamina, unless quickly followed by DRAGON ROUGE implementation, would cause a loss of surprise and the danger that rebel panic would wipe

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out the advantage gained in reaction time. Also, it had to be considered that the rebels might respond by dispersing the prisoners all over the area.

The State/Defense group met Saturday morning, the 21st, to discuss the Spaak request. Receipt of the "devour message" decided the issue and at 1719Z the JCS ordered CINCSTRIKE to deploy the DRAGON ROUGE force to Kamina. CINCSTRIKE was further ordered to be prepared to execute the assault on Stanleyville on minimum notice. In accordance with the original timing plan, the preferred drop time would be at 0400Z, so presumably the earliest preferred actual drop time would be 0400Z on Monday the 23rd.

CINCSTRIKE, in turn, declared DEFCON 1 for the DRAGON ROUGE force at 1745Z. The DRAGON ROUGE force began moving from Ascension late on the 21st and the last aircraft closed on Kamina at 0950Z on the 22nd.

The situation in Stanleyville, however, now seemed so desperate that the State/Defense group considered the possibility of sending the DRAGON ROUGE force straight on to the city, after refueling at Kamina. The JCS warned CINCSTRIKE at 1838Z on the 21st that the possibility existed that the drop might be ordered as soon as possible instead of at 0400Z on Monday the 23rd as planned. He was warned to take action necessary to execute this contingency, such as expediting the refueling at Kamina and the alerting of the B-26 support. The intention of this message was to prevent any relaxation of full alert status on arrival in Kamina. Even though the decision to go on had not been taken, the decision makers were now fully aware of the critical importance of minutes. If, by the time the planes reached Kamina and refueled, the crisis in Stanleyville

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appeared at hand and massacre had begun, it would have been possible to launch for Stanleyville Sunday afternoon, drop the troops and still have two or three hours of daylight in which to effect rescues. The timing is shown on Figure 5.

CINCSTRIKE was also warned of the possibility that operations at Bunia and Paulis might be implemented in lieu of or following a Stanleyville drop, and was requested to initiate movement of equipment needed to support DRAGON BLANC or DRAGON NOIR via Ascension to Kamina.

Under Secretary Ball notified Godley and MacArthur at 1934Z Saturday evening that a top level meeting had been called for nine o'clock that evening to reach a decision on a possible move to Stanleyville. The meeting would consider three possible orders to the military commander:

- a. To hold at Kamina pending further orders.
- b. If the force could get to Stanleyville before nightfall Sunday, he should do so. Otherwise, he should move to Stanleyville the next dawn, the 23rd.
- c. To wait until dawn of the 24th.

The decision would be taken by 0300Z on the 22nd and absolutely no later than 0500Z. Ball requested the views of Godley and MacArthur, as well as of Spaak and DeKerchove in as firm a state as possible as near to 0200Z as possible. The timing now had become agonizingly delicate.

The JCS warned CINCSTRIKE that, should the decision be made to proceed to Stanleyville prior to dark on the 22nd, he would receive his execute order prior to 222300Z.

Godley replied at 0100Z on the 22nd that the best means of saving the hostages was to bring maximum simultaneous

FIGURE 5. DRAGON ROUGE Planning
(As of November 21st)
Ascension - Stanleyville

	First Aircraft Arrive Kamina (ETA)	Last Aircraft Arrive Kamina (ETA)	Time Required to Refuel & Prepare to Launch	Earliest Possible Assault		Earliest Planned Assault (First Light)	
				Launch Kamina	H-Hour	Launch Kamina	H-Hour
Zulu Time	220500Z	220700Z	3 Hours	221000Z	221300Z	230100Z	230400Z
Local Time Stanleyville/ Kamina Z + 2	220700	220900	3 Hours	221200	221500	230300	230600
Washington Time Z - 5	212400 (midnight)	220200	3 Hours	220500	220800	222000	222300

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military pressure on Stanleyville. Therefore DRAGON ROUGE and VDW should be as closely coordinated as possible. He was awaiting word on this from VDW, and in the absence of VDW's opinions and of new information of further action against the hostages, preferred to hold at Kamina. He pointed out that he still had not totally given up hope that DRAGON ROUGE could be foregone and also noted that the closer the coordination between DRAGON ROUGE and VDW, the less time DRAGON ROUGE would have to remain in Stanleyville. He ruled out a drop Sunday afternoon after a refueling stop only at Kamina, on the grounds both that it would be too late to consolidate the target before dark and that VDW would still be too far away. The alternative of a drop at first light on the 23rd he also felt to be premature, unless VDW hit unexpectedly strong resistance or the hostage climate in the city deteriorated markedly.

Godley therefore clearly accepted the VDW-DRAGON ROUGE relationship and urged its exploitation. The planning of the field group seems persistently to have aimed at a coordinated operation.

Apparently the deciding factor in the deliberations of the State/Defense group at their meeting Saturday evening was MacArthur's reply that the Belgians felt that the original schedule for a Monday morning drop should be adhered to. They feared the change of time could cause serious dislocations. Consequently, the DRAGON ROUGE force was notified at 0635Z on the 22nd that upon arrival at Kamina, the aircraft and forces were to be prepared to execute at first light on Monday, the 23rd, with the execute order being sent prior to 2300Z on the 22nd unless developments in the next eighteen hours indicated the desirability of a further postponement. The timing is

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shown on Figure 5. The commander was warned, however, to be refueled within three hours after arrival at Kamina in case further deterioration of the situation in Stanleyville would require execution by 1200 local on the 22nd for a 1500 local drop that afternoon. The message emphasized that the most critical factor in the final decision to launch would be information regarding a deteriorating situation in the city.

Apparently late on the 21st, after the State/Defense group had decided not to go straight for Stanleyville Sunday afternoon, but to be prepared to do so, the question arose of deferral of the assault until Tuesday. MacArthur was asked at 0630Z on the 22nd to get Spaak's judgment on whether to go Monday or to wait on the possibility of VDW's arrival at Stanleyville Tuesday. An answer was requested by 1600Z. State indicated that it was inclined to give the maximum weight to the Belgian judgment in reaching the decision.

At 1020Z MacArthur replied that Spaak felt the operation should proceed Monday first light as planned. However, he was awaiting word from Leo in regard to the status of the VDW advance, and the latest information was that VDW had been delayed.

As the truth of this became established, the weight of opinion swung in the State/Defense group more to a Tuesday first light drop. Coupled with the news of VDW came a certain relaxation in the tenor of rebel broadcasts from Stanleyville. For the moment, at least, it appeared that massacres were not about to begin. Consequently, Godley recommended a twenty-four hour delay. At the afternoon meeting in Secretary Rusk's office, the decision was made not to assault on Monday morning.

FIGURE 3. DRAGON ROUGE TIMING

(As of November 22nd)

Kamina - Stanleyville

	Decision Required	Safe Transmission Time	Execution Order Required Kamina	Planned Assault (First Light)	
Zulu Time	222200Z	1 Hour	222300Z	Launch Kamina 230100Z	H-Hour 230400Z
Local Time Stanleyville/ Kamina Z + 2	222400	1 Hour	230100Z	230300	230600
Washington Time Z - 5	221700	1 Hour	221800	222000	222300

Stanleyville Time

First Light 0541
 Sunrise 0603
 Sunset 1808
 Last Light 1830

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The move to Kamina was really decisive. While doubts continued until the last minute, and as will be seen, even increased in the last twenty-four hours, the fact that the DRAGON ROUGE force was on Congo soil created a certain undeniable inevitability. Try as the decision makers did to avoid the pressure to go on created by the move to Kamina, its weight was of key importance in the last step of the decision.

V. THE ADVANCE TO STANLEYVILLE
AND BEYOND: STEP THREE

No amount of careful calculation could give the decision makers a precise reading on the degree of risk to the hostages in the absence of DRAGON ROUGE. Execution of the assault would reduce the risk to the hostages in Stanleyville, but might simultaneously increase the risk to the hostages in the outlying towns. In neither case, it might be added, did the decision makers have a clear idea of the numbers of hostages involved. The figures generally used-- 800 plus for Stanleyville and 100-300 in the other towns-- were both only gross estimates.

The basic choice was between reducing, by an admittedly unknown factor, the risk to the hostages, and withholding the rescue operation because of the strain it would inevitably impose upon already troubled relations with a number of African states. An indication of the depth of U.S. concern over possible repercussions was illustrated by a warning on the 20th from State to all African posts to take necessary preliminary emergency and evacuation steps inconspicuously.

After the decision not to launch the assault for Sunday afternoon, the next thirty-six hours were occupied by assessment of three primary factors. These were the tactical factors as distinguished from the long-range strategic one of U.S. relations with the African states. The prime tactical one remained the situation in Stanleyville. So long as no massacres had begun, no immediate action was needed. The other two were the location of VDW's columns and the negotiations with the rebels.

A. THE NEGOTIATIONS

Both Jomo Kenyatta, the Prime Minister of Kenya, and the OAU had taken the initiative in the matter of negotiations between

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the U.S. and the rebels. On the 18th Kenyatta had offered his good offices, appealing to all parties to cease hostilities pending negotiations on the hostages. With this offer, he was patently supporting the rebel objective. In this he had been seconded by Diallo Telli of Guinea, Secretary-General of the OAU. The U.S. had authorized Ambassador Attwood in Nairobi to meet with the rebel envoy, Thomas Kanza, the foreign minister of the rebel regime, in the presence of Kenyatta and Telli. Throughout the "negotiations" both Kenyatta and Telli very obviously supported the rebel position.

Late on the 20th Godley reported having received a telegram from Consul Hoyt in Stanleyville. It was quite apparent from the wording of the message that Hoyt had been-compelled by the rebels to send the message. It made clear the fact that the rebels did not intend to negotiate except on a basis of a prior GDRC decision to accept a cease fire and a U.S. decision to withdraw all military aid to GDRC. Godley strongly advised the Department against any attempt to pressure the GDRC into accepting such terms. [Godley was correct in believing that some extreme concessions were being considered in the Department, concessions which would have to be forced upon Tshombe and Kasavubu.] He was convinced that the rebels were only playing for time and that only sustained military pressure on them would be likely to save the lives of the hostages.

Kanza, however, did not show up for the first scheduled meeting on the 21st with Attwood.

The Belgians then picked up the initiative. Spaak sent an appeal to Gbenye on the 21st expressing his hope for good treatment of the hostages and for rebel acceptance of the Red Cross presence to assist in evacuating them. The appeal, however, was

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only a gesture for the record; since Spaak expected nothing from the rebels. Their next effort was through the U.N. On the afternoon of the 22nd the Belgians informed the President of the Security Council of the situation in Stanleyville. The U.S. sent a supporting letter, and the two Governments jointly asked that the letters be circulated to all member states of the Security Council, requesting their support in an appeal to the rebels to release the hostages. Both Governments also reserved the right to call a special meeting of the Security Council on the matter.

The U.S. then had a three-point political program in operation. We had responded affirmatively to the Gbenye suggestion for talks, and were awaiting only the arrival of the rebel envoy; we had notified the Security Council of the crisis; we were giving support to a worldwide appeal, launched by Canada and the United Kingdom, to ask the rebels to permit the ICRC representatives back into Stanleyville.

On the 22nd Attwood managed to get a commitment from Kanza through Kenyatta to meet definitely at 0800Z on the 23rd. He immediately urged the Department to make every effort to ensure that the rebel leadership left in Stanleyville knew of the forthcoming meeting, in the hope that it would temper their actions.

Political temperatures in Africa had begun rising ever since it became known the paratroops were on Ascension. Despite elaborate security measures and the blackout of all news from Ascension, it was now clear that the U.S. and Belgium were considering a military intervention. Now by 1100Z on the 23rd the news that the paratroops were in Kamina began to circulate. The Belgians denied it [and the British insisted the force was] R

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still on Ascension. As the hue and cry began throughout African and Asian states, it exerted a heavy influence at the very last moment on the decision makers, seeming to justify fully their fears over the political consequences of DRAGON ROUGE. The impact of this rising storm was to be revealed in the last-minute actions of the Americans and the Belgians.

The crucial meeting of Ambassador Attwood and Kanza took place on the 23rd, but later than originally scheduled. At 1300Z Attwood reported that he had met the rebel envoy, but that Kanza had no messages from Hoyt such as we had requested. He did state, however, that he was expecting to receive them. As the talk continued, Kanza made clear that he had been instructed to discuss Congo problems generally, and not just the case of the hostages. In this he was warmly abetted by Kenyatta who called for an immediate cease fire. Attwood reported that the meeting was useless. Negotiations as a factor in the decision were cancelled out.

B. DECISION IN WASHINGTON: LAST MINUTE CONSIDERATIONS

During the discussions of the State/Defense group late on the 21st, concern began to arise over the possibility that the DRAGON ROUGE force might not be able to do the job alone, in the event the drop was not coordinated with VDW's arrival.

As has been mentioned, intelligence on the situation in Stanleyville was extremely uncertain, and this uncertainty extended to enemy strength as well. Information, mostly derived from prisoner interrogation and hence quite unreliable, provided by DIA to CINCEUR on the 16th, indicated that as of 10 November there were 5,000 rebels in the city. There was a possibility that this might double as retreating rebels arrived from outlying areas. However, it was estimated that not more

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than 10 percent of this number represented an effective fighting force. Reports further indicated that while the rebels had no antiaircraft guns, there were numerous 30-caliber machine guns in the vicinity of the airport.

Apparently Secretary Rusk raised the point of possible inadequacy of DRAGON ROUGE and asked the CJCS whether we had any plan to back up the DRAGON force with U.S. forces. General Wheeler replied that we did not.

However, it appears the JCS quickly considered the issue and recommended verbally to the SecDef that U.S. forces be used as back-up under a variation of the HIGH BEAM plan. The Secretary absolutely refused to discuss the possible use of U.S. forces.

At 0440Z on the 22nd Mr. Vance reported to the SecDef on the meeting at State, after which he had called the President to get his approval to alert the DRAGON force to prepare on arrival at Kamina for a Monday morning drop. He then told the SecDef that he wanted to move a squadron of C-130Es from the U.S. to Moron, Spain, to replace the DRAGON ROUGE craft. These additional planes would be available to lift French or other troops as a back-up force. The Secretary was unresponsive. He did not think anyone else's troops were going to be available for lifting, and he was opposed to the use of U.S. troops. If there were not to be any troops, he queried, why were planes necessary? Nevertheless, he reluctantly agreed to the squadron deployment.

The JCS then directed CINCSTRIKE to deploy a squadron of C-130Es (16 aircraft) to Moron for possible contingency action, the squadron to be in position at Moron by 1355Z on the 23rd and ready for two-hour reaction time by 0155Z on the 24th.

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Even if the idea had been feasible, it was rendered unnecessary by the ultimate decision to tie the assault to VDW's arrival. The whole discussion of the possible need for a back-up force, which apparently occupied a considerable amount of time in the State/Defense meetings, was predicated upon the assumption that DRAGON ROUGE would have to go into Stanleyville alone. This assumption presumed that VDW would not be nearby and that the airdrop would have to be made because of the urgency of the situation. From the very beginning of the affair, it should be recalled, the relationship between VDW and DRAGON ROUGE was recognized, although politically resisted. However, during the weekend, when information came through indicating that VDW actually had been delayed, the possibility again arose that the paratroops might have to go ahead alone.

It will be recalled that in the HIGH BEAM planning, CINCSRIKE, with the support of the Chairman JCS, had proposed a two-battalion force with another battalion as standby back-up. Now in the actual event only one undersized battalion was to be employed. It is not clear why this became a matter of concern so late in the day. The original recognition of the relationship of VDW to DRAGON ROUGE was based upon the fact that the closer VDW approached Stanleyville, the more the risk to the hostages grew. Therefore, the drop should be made ideally when VDW was close enough to be able to get to the city soon after the assault, but before the rebels had begun to massacre the hostages. Despite the U.S. desire to keep the operations separate, it was also clearly in U.S. national interest in the longer term to have VDW be able to exploit the rebel confusion and retreat resulting from DRAGON ROUGE as a step in the final smashing of the rebel movement. This was the truth we found very difficult to admit.

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Participants in the decision-making deliberations of the weekend insist that it was not realized at the time that the DRAGON force would not have enough strength to secure the airfield and also to seize the city. There was certainly a shortage of transport which would permit the paratroops to fan out through the city in search of hostages. Yet only a recognition of this weakness, in the absence of a timely VDW arrival, could explain the concern that arose over a back-up force and the suggestion that French troops be sought.]

However, the situation began to clarify somewhat by Sunday evening, the 22nd. Godley reported at 1911Z on a conference between VDW and DRAGON ROUGE planners at which it was agreed that VDW could arrive in Stanleyville during the morning of the 24th. It was also agreed that it was highly desirable to drop on Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa too, but it was not technically feasible to do all during one day. Drops on these three could only be made forty-eight hours after the Stanleyville drop. The planners then decided to concentrate on Paulis and Bunia where aircraft could be landed. Two possible courses of action emerged: a November 23rd drop on Stanleyville and a drop on Paulis and Bunia on the 25th; a 24th drop on Stanleyville and the follow-up drops on the 26th. The Belgian paratroop commander originally favored the first course, but agreed ultimately with VDW to favor the second.

In the meantime the DRAGON ROUGE force was continuing to plan and to prepare for an 0400Z drop on the 23rd. The JCS warned CINCSRIKE and CINCEUR at 1919Z that the final U.S.-Belgian decision to execute might be made at the last possible moment. The DRAGON aircraft were to be loaded and engines started as necessary to meet the possible 0100Z launch time on the 23rd.

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CINCSTRIKE in turn warned COMUS JTF Leo what the sequence for DRAGON ROUGE execution would be. The decision to launch would be made in Washington no later than 2200Z. Allowing safe transmission time of one hour, the message should be in the hands of COMUS JTF in Kamina at 2300Z. However, even if optimum conditions existed for transmission, the decision to execute might run up to the last minute and perhaps beyond the 2200Z deadline. Consequently, COMUS JTF should be prepared to act in shortest possible time. The order to execute was to consist of the unclassified words "BIG PUNCH", the word "PUNCH" indicating to the Belgian commander that the Belgian Government had agreed to and directed execution.¹ After execution had been ordered, there might be some reason to rescind the order and to call off the assault. For this circumstance the message "DRAGON ROUGE BLUE FISH" would indicate that all aircraft should return to Kamina.

The JCS finally informed CINCSTRIKE at 2312Z on the 22nd that the drop would not be ordered for 0400Z next morning.

During this last day of the 23rd some of the hesitation which had marked the U.S. approach to the whole business becomes apparent in Spaak too. MacArthur reported at 1130Z that he had gone over with Spaak the message from the planners in Leo, recommending the 0400Z drop the next morning with further follow-up drops two days later. Spaak was worried, saying, curiously, that the message from Leo gave him the impression that the Belgians in the Congo already seemed subconsciously to assume that the decision to execute had been made and that military timing was the only remaining issue.

¹It had been agreed that all communications to the DRAGON ROUGE force, once under way from Belgium, were to be via U.S. military channels only.

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Spaak reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of the Tuesday-Thursday drop schedule. The advantage lay in the ultimate coordination of VDW and DRAGON ROUGE which made a swift capture of the city possible. The disadvantage, of course, was that international opinion could misconstrue the real purpose of DRAGON ROUGE. The Foreign Minister repeated that he was prepared to launch the airdrop to save the hostages, but that if the hostages could be liberated by VDW without unacceptable results to the hostages, it would be politically preferable. He assumed the U.S. felt the same way.

Spaak told MacArthur that the Belgian Government would make a new assessment and would inform the U.S. of its decision by 2000Z. He required the latest information on the Nairobi talks, and wired DeKerchove in Leo for answers to three questions:

- a. Will VDW progress continue in accord with anticipated timing?
- b. Did VDW believe that execution of DRAGON ROUGE was indispensable to assure the security of the Europeans?
If rebel resistance did not increase, would DRAGON ROUGE be necessary?
- c. If DRAGON ROUGE did not take place, would it be possible to execute drops on Bunia and Paulis on Wednesday?

Spaak's hesitation at literally the last hour is difficult to explain. The issues that made him draw back had been evident throughout the entire decision-making period. MacArthur felt that what probably now weighed most heavily on him was the fear that rescue of the Stanleyville hostages might precipitate a massacre of the hostages elsewhere.

It is this very involved interrelationship of cause and effect which makes the DRAGON ROUGE decision such a fascinating

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one. Every decision has its price tag, and DRAGON ROUGE had many. There was, after all, no concrete proof that the hostages actually would be butchered as VDW approached Stanleyville. To avoid this possibility, rather than this certainty, DRAGON ROUGE would be launched. It might save the hostages, or some of them, but might lead to slaughter elsewhere. The political antagonism and repercussion likely to be generated would be intense. Yet, there was no certainty that VDW alone couldn't capture the city and prevent massacre of most of the hostages. Lastly, a white man's intervention on behalf of Tshombe would open the door to support to the rebels by all those neighboring African governments hostile to Tshombe, thus only turning the Congo into an even greater imbroglio, and effecting a revival of the rebel movement at the very moment when it was facing defeat.

Godley responded vigorously to MacArthur's account of Spaak's reluctance. While agreeing with the Belgian's arguments about the difficulty of separating VDW from the DRAGON force, he suggested means of avoiding mixing the two forces by the allotment of separate missions in different geographic sectors of the city. Furthermore, the paratroops could be withdrawn to the airport gradually as the hostages were liberated. Godley urged the execution as scheduled, pointing out that to cancel at that late date would bring as much onus as implementing, since it would be impossible to prevent word spreading that the force had gone as far as Kamina. Those unfriendly to us would then be able to claim that the physical presence of the force on Congo soil was itself intervention and had a moral effect in driving the rebels out of Stanleyville.

At 1920Z the long-delayed signal came. MacArthur had seen Spaak and had put to him, as requested by telecon from Washington, three possible courses of action: 1) VDW column assault

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on the 23rd (that same day) without DRAGON ROUGE; 2) DRAGON ROUGE November 24 coupled with VDW arrival sometime the same day; 3) DRAGON ROUGE November 24 with VDW's arrival suspended until November 25.

Spaak said he had considered these proposals already and that now that the decision was pending, the ultimate criterion must be the safety of the hostages. As to alternative No. 1, VDW's forces would have to be rested at least briefly that night for assault the next day and might not arrive until mid-morning. This would mean there might be an entire morning for massacre before the column arrived. Furthermore, if VDW arrived without DRAGON ROUGE, the column would enter the city from the east and have to make its way all across the city against resistance to the west of the city where the hostages were believed concentrated, obviously increasing risks for the hostages. If DRAGON ROUGE were implemented, however, resistance was expected to be slight.

Alternative No. 2 would provide maximum resources available, and in the right position, for the rapid rescue of the hostages. Alternative No. 3 was unrealistic since VDW would arrive in the city sometime on the 24th whether DRAGON ROUGE were implemented or not. The Belgians had no reason to believe the column could be held up for twenty-four hours, and felt such an effort would be bitterly and successfully resisted by the GDRC and VDW. Also, if DRAGON ROUGE were implemented alone, there would be fewer forces available.

In view of the overriding criterion, Spaak felt it would be "grotesque" to allow our concern for international feelings to jeopardize the lives of more than a thousand people. He therefore requested that MacArthur inform the U.S. Government that DRAGON ROUGE should be implemented as planned November 24.

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In the interests of caution, the Foreign Minister suggested that no news correspondents be allowed into Stanleyville for the first twenty-four hours. Their presence would complicate the public relations problem of simultaneous arrival.

The State/Defense group had met that afternoon while awaiting Spaak's word. With its arrival the decision to launch DRAGON ROUGE was made. At 1900Z the JCS directed CINCSTRIKE to execute at 0400Z November 24.

The critical decision having been reached, there still remained a few steps to be taken to support the U.S. and Belgian position. Secretary Rusk requested DOD at 2141Z to try to minimize press access to Stanleyville, in accord with Spaak's suggestion, until the operation had been completed and the force withdrawn. No U.S. personnel or aircraft except DRAGON ROUGE were to enter Stanleyville until the city had been secured by VDW. Additionally, U.S. personnel were to avoid strictly any role in the ground fighting. It was also requested that VDW be reminded of the importance of good behavior on the part of his forces, since excesses would only compound a sticky situation.

A few minutes later State requested that CINCSTRIKE follow the Belgian suggestion to have the DRAGON force withdraw to the airfield perimeter after rescue operations were completed in order to avoid mixing with the ANC troops.

[On the political side, State at 2127Z informed the American Ambassadors in London, Paris, and Bonn that DRAGON ROUGE would be implemented the next morning. At 2203Z the Embassy in Moscow was alerted similarly to inform the Soviet Government.]

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On the 21st the Belgians submitted a letter of an interim character to the President of the Security Council, describing the dangerous situation and mentioning "preparatory steps" having been taken. The President of the Council for the month conveniently was the U.S. representative, Ambassador Stevenson. When the U.S. soon after followed the Belgians with a letter, the Ambassador was put in the position of having to address a letter to himself.

The U S. suggestion to call a special meeting of the Security Council revived again at this time, and with no greater success with the Belgians than on its first being raised. At 2225Z MacArthur reported a conversation with Spaak on the subject during which the Foreign Minister reiterated his opposition. He felt the letters would be adequate. MacArthur requested State to send him the scenario the U.S. proposed to follow.

The scenario put forth by State was to be the same as for the Tonkin Gulf crisis of August 1964. There were similar cases too of the employment of controlled force for a limited objective plus a simultaneous public explanation in the U.N., Lebanon and Cuba, for example. It was possible in these three cases to avoid unfriendly resolutions and to provide effective political cover for a necessary military action, which removed the potential bad taste.

On the afternoon of the 23rd Ambassador Stevenson at the U.N. reported that the Belgian representative to the U.N. was opposed inflexibly to the move, on the grounds that it would imply a guilt feeling and would put Belgium in the dock. After all, no Security Council meeting had been called to consider the British military actions in suppressing army mutinies in Kenya

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and Tanzania in January 1964 or for a French military action in restoring an overturned regime in Gabon.

The basic difference of opinion was that the U.S. felt it would be less onerous to call a meeting than to have one called against us, while the Belgians felt it would be better to risk this rather than to make such a meeting a certainty, since there was always a chance that no meeting would be called.

A compromise solution was reached by Spaak and MacArthur very early on the 24th by which the Belgians essentially won their point. The U.S. and Belgium agreed to send a full written report to the Security Council without requesting a formal Council meeting. They would watch and concert to head off any unfriendly initiative for a Council meeting and in such case agreed to consider a preemptive move such as calling a meeting themselves.

VI. DRAGON ROUGE EXECUTED

The military operation at Stanleyville and the follow-up at Paulis were both so smoothly executed that, in terms of interest, it is almost anticlimatic compared to the decision-making period.

The forces involved in the operation at Stanleyville included:

- a. Belgian - 545 paratroops
- b. U.S. - 19 C-130Es (13 for DRAGON ROUGE, including one spare, 2 STRICOM communications aircraft, 4 JTF)
125 USAF personnel, 150 JTF Leo personnel
275 total U.S.
- c. The VDW columns that closed in on the city numbered 1090 men (120 mercenaries, 500 Katangese gendarmes, 20 Belgians, 450 ANC).
- d. Aircraft support - 4 T-6 at Punia
4 T-28 at Punia
2 or 3 B-26 at Kindu
16 C-130E (USAF) at Moron
4 C-124 (USAF) - carrying equipment for follow-up operations, ETA Leo November 25.

Twelve C-130Es with the DRAGON ROUGE force were launched from Kamina between 0045Z and 0145Z on the 24th. One aircraft, carrying thirteen paratroops and four of the vital armored jeeps, aborted and returned to Kamina at 0200Z. Its load was transferred to a spare aircraft and it was airborne again by 0301Z.

At 0400Z exactly the paratroops began to jump. Within four minutes of the landing of the paratroops the airfield was secured, and the first aircraft landed at 0450Z. At 0505Z the paratroops moved into the city where, by a small miracle, they arrived at the very moment the rebels had begun to fire on a group of several hundred hostages. Some thirty hostages were

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killed, including Doctor Carlson and a female missionary. All five American officials were rescued. The refugees were moved to the airfield immediately and began arriving there by 0630Z. The removal of the hostages was facilitated by the presence of a State Department officer of the Congo Working Group, Mr. Clingerman, who had been Consul in Stanleyville until the previous Spring and thus was familiar with the city. He had joined the DRAGON force at Brussels with the specific mission of planning measures to be taken to rescue the Americans who were felt to be in greatest danger.

There was no serious fighting, and the number of rebels killed was estimated by the paratroop commander to be only some 150, although U.S. sources felt this figure was quite high. However, all the rebels did not simply melt into the bush as had been expected, although probably the greater number of them did. After the initial shock wore off, the rebels began sniping and the search of the city was harassed at every step. It became clear that if the operation had gone on the basis of a seizure of the airfield and the city by the paratroops alone, the capabilities of the DRAGON force might have been seriously strained.

As it was, the expected ground strength arrived at the airport at 0900Z in the form of the VDW columns. The columns also provided the mobility which the paratroops lacked, a lack which would have seriously constrained them had not the hostages been assembled in town.

At 1805Z COM JTF Leo cabled CINCSTRIKE that the paratroop mission appeared to be completed, and that the force was preparing for follow-on operations, the earliest likely being on the 26th. By 1400Z the paratroops gradually began to withdraw

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toward the airfield perimeter according to plan, while the VDW forces undertook the clearing of the city. This proved to be a more lengthy and difficult task than anticipated, so that the city was really not secured fully before the DRAGON force left.

A. OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS

The operation as a whole progressed remarkably smoothly, but certain problems did arise in connection with communications and tactical air support. Communication problems are dealt with in the communications annex of this study. In the matter of tactical air support, only two B-26s accompanied the C-130 column in the actual assault. One of the B-26 made a single firing pass in the objective area to silence a machine gun firing from the end of the airport runway, and that constituted the actual air support for DRAGON ROUGE. The JTF weather recce C-130 carried COMUS JTF, and orbited Stanleyville outside a twenty-five-mile radius until rendezvous time with the air assault force. The first report by COMUS JTF stated that the B-26s were most effective simply by virtue of their presence in the area.

However, later in the day, in a more considered report, he indicated that the performance of the strike aircraft had been minimal, that their poor radio discipline might have alerted the rebels, and that there were only three good pilots available. The Belgian troop commander was not particularly interested in the planes, and COMUS JTF expressed a complete lack of confidence in them. He requested permission to make the decision locally as to the employment of the strike planes in any follow-up operations.

The request was rejected by CINCSTRIKE on the advice of the Joint Staff, and COMUS JTF was directed to plan for the fullest use of the planes in the follow-up operations. However, in the single follow-up operation, neither of the two strike aircraft assigned reached the target area. One B-26 aborted; the other lost its way.

B. FOLLOW-ON OPERATIONS

In the meantime in Washington the State/Defense group met to discuss the success of the operation and the possibility of follow-on operations. Adverse reaction around the world followed hard upon the official announcements of the assault, and political pressures very soon began to build and to exert an influence on U.S. and Belgian decision makers. In a sense, DRAGON ROUGE had made follow-up operations almost inevitable, since the rebels would likely react to the DRAGON operation by killing hostages in the outlying towns, once word of the Stanleyville assault reached them. Nevertheless, there was great reluctance to go further, reluctance which tended to increase in proportion to hostile international reaction. Secretary Rusk, in discussing the choice at the State/Defense group meeting on the 24th, drew the distinction between the Stanleyville operation and the projected one at Paulis where the largest concentration of refugees was reported to be. Stanleyville was a clear-cut case with a known concentration of hostages and established atrocities. In Paulis, on the other hand, we did not know the number of hostages and there were no concrete reports of atrocities. The Secretary said he would be asked questions on these differences if further operations were executed.

It was not only that we did not know how many hostages there actually were or where they were held, but there was an additional serious problem for the decision makers, that of where to stop. Follow-up operations could be self-generative, and yet each new one would produce diminishing returns in the form of live hostages, as the rebels either killed or dispersed captives.

The State Department made its position clear in a memo to DOD during the evening of the 24th, requesting a combined

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U.S.-Belgian military appraisal of the situation in Stanleyville and the effect on it of a withdrawal of the DRAGON force on the 25th. The force would be restaged to Kamina, and the U.S. and Belgium would presumably thereby gain political favor, since it would be clear to all that DRAGON ROUGE had really been a swift humanitarian operation. It was also suggested, but not explained, that such a withdrawal would also perhaps provide a measure of protection to the foreign residents of Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa. State, however, made clear it did not wish to redeploy to Kamina unless this were prudent in the judgment of the military commanders. State did hope that the DRAGON force could commence a withdrawal the next day without prejudicing the security of Stanleyville, even if the withdrawal had to be continued into November 26.

The military opinion was sought so that the U.S. and Belgian Governments could decide either to begin the withdrawal from Stanleyville on November 25, or to proceed with DRAGONS NOIR and BLANC on November 26 in the light of the views from the field.

The Belgians were also apparently reluctant to go on. Spaak was similarly in favor of a rapid redeployment to Kamina, but also was willing to defer to judgment on the spot. That judgment was reported at 1120Z on the 25th by Godley who had met with the Belgian paratroop commander. The commander wanted to limit the next phase to DRAGON NOIR, the Paulis operation, since his force was too small and tired. Until that point, apparently all the command group in the Congo were thinking in terms of DRAGON BLANC as well. They were supported by CINC-STRIKE who urged the JCS to do Paulis on the 26th, Bunia on the 27th and Watsa thereafter.

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Godley was concerned lest Spaak's reluctance cancel out even DRAGON NOIR, and at 1517Z on the 25th urged State to proceed the next day to Paulis. He did not think Spaak's desire to pull back to Kamina was prudent. His view and that of the field commanders carried the day, and at 1751Z the JCS directed CINC-STRIKE to make all preparations for the execution of DRAGON NOIR at 0400Z the next day. CINCSTRIKE was informed an hour later by the JCS that the execution of DRAGON BLANC was presently not contemplated. He was requested to make every effort to provide air support to expedite the VDW column moving toward Bunia.

The actual execute order went out to STRIKE at 2309Z. Simultaneously, guidance for DRAGON NOIR was sent to MacArthur to assure complete agreement with the Belgians. The points raised were that:

a. The operation at Paulis was strictly an in-out one lasting no longer than twenty-four hours, subject to military exigencies.

b. The DRAGON NOIR force was not under any circumstance to delay its departure from Paulis in order to permit the ANC to reoccupy the city, nor would it take any rebel prisoners.

c. As soon as the Paulis evacuees reached Stanleyville and were sent on to Leo, the DRAGON ROUGE force would immediately redeploy to Kamina.

d. Within the shortest possible time, the force should redeploy Kamina-Ascension-Las Palmas-Spain-Belgium.

Apparently the twenty-four-hour limitation was relaxed and extended since the first JCS SITREP to all CINCs at 0354Z on the 26th mentioned a forty-eight-hour deadline. Spaak had wanted assurance that the force would be out of Paulis within

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forty-eight hours, but was told that such an assurance could be given only if there were no guarantee that the mission would be completely fulfilled.

MacArthur replied at 0218Z on the 26th that the Belgians agreed with the U.S. guidance and that it must be left to VDW to free the rest of the captives.

During the night of the 25th seven C-130s were moved from Leo to Stanleyville for the purpose of loading two paratroop companies (256 men) for the Paulis drop. Four carried men and three were loaded with vehicles. The aircraft were launched from Kamina at 0255Z and the paratroopers jumped at 0400Z. By 0630Z the city had been secured. Some three hundred hostages, including seven Americans, were rescued and flown out.

The DRAGON NOIR force was not redeployed to Stanleyville en route to Kamina until 1620Z on the 27th. In the meantime, those DRAGON ROUGE forces not used in the Paulis operation were withdrawn from Stanleyville to Kamina on the 26th.

MacArthur and Godley had been informed by State late on the 25th that BLANC and VERT were not to be undertaken because overriding political interests demanded the fastest possible withdrawal from the Congo. Godley objected that the job was being left half done and that, in view of the rebel atrocities revealed in Paulis, the other two DRAGONS should be executed. VDW was too far away to be able to effect fast rescue.

State, however, was adamant and replied to Godley that the decision had been taken at the highest level of both U.S. and Belgian Governments. There were apparently very few Americans left in rebel areas; the decision rested heavily with the Belgians who provided the troops; furthermore, the fear had grown that DRAGON

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ROUGE would be used as an excuse by certain African states to begin systematic aggression against the GDRC via the rebels in the Eastern Congo.

Spaak himself said that the remaining Belgians in the Congo were scattered in fourteen separate places with an additional hundred dispersed individually through rebel territory. To rescue all would mean an all-out military operation of great magnitude, involving liberation and/or occupation which would not be militarily feasible or acceptable to international opinion. Indeed the very reason for DRAGON ROUGE was the large concentration of hostages where a limited operation was feasible. There was, to be sure, a reported concentration of up to 1,000 non-Congolese in Wamba, but the number of Belgians there was unknown.

[However, Spaak also felt that the U.S. and Belgium should also do everything they could to assist VDW in moving ahead as rapidly as possible, since this would give the best chance for the remaining foreigners in the outlying towns in rebel territory. MacArthur reported early on the 28th that Spaak fully agreed with a proposal made by Godley to State that the paratroopers' armored jeeps be left in Kamina where they could be of great use in increasing the capability of VDW to effect ground rescue of the stranded foreigners. Spaak also asked that the U.S. temporarily leave three of the DRAGON ROUGE aircraft in the Congo to supplement the existing four JTF craft, only two of which he understood were operational. The command group in Leo had urgently recommended this as another means of assisting VDW's ground rescue operations.]

Spaak also stated that he had been told that if the armored jeeps were to be left in the Congo, the remaining DRAGON ROUGE aircraft could probably repatriate the whole paratroop force. He

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hoped this could be done. If the remaining DRAGON ROUGE aircraft were not sufficient to repatriate all the paratroops, the Belgian Government would try to make other arrangements for the few who could not be carried in the C-130s. This, however, might take a little time and would be unfortunate in view of the wisdom of a rapid withdrawal of all the DRAGON force from the Congo.

MacArthur recommended that both of Spaak's suggestions be accepted. Apparently Ambassador Palmer of the Congo Working Group phoned the U.S. consent to MacArthur, and that same noon the JCS directed CINCSTRIKE to augment JTF Leo with two additional C-130s. CINCSTRIKE, in turn, directed JTF Leo to leave the armored jeeps and to adjust the redeployment of the force accordingly. The way was thus cleared for the return of the DRAGON force in its original airlift.

While reaction in many parts of Africa and Asia was hostile and in places violently so, Western press reaction generally was one of amazement that the rescue missions had been cancelled after Paulis, leaving at least a thousand more non-Congolese to rebel mercies. Hostile reaction was naturally confined to the Bloc and to some of the newer countries, but actual violence occurred only in Sofia and Moscow where the U.S. embassies were stoned. There were also demonstrations on the 26th in Nairobi, Prague and Cairo. In the last named, the mob burned down that conveniently vulnerable symbol of American influence, the USIA Library.

Evacuation totals for both ROUGE and NOIR were:

Stanleyville - 1650

Paulis - $\frac{250}{1900}$

[REDACTED]

Simultaneously with the Stanleyville rescue, one of VDW's columns liberated an additional 144 non-Congolese, including ten Americans, at Aketi.

As the DRAGON ROUGE force was withdrawing, the focus of political efforts on the part of the U.S. and Belgium was on preparing a defense against international opinion, especially in the U.N. General Assembly which was due to meet the next week, and on assisting the GDRC to maintain some military advantage in the Northeastern Congo. Heavy pressure was put on the GDRC to ensure good behavior on the part of the ANC and to put its best foot forward politically. VDW was urged to speed up his operations to try to reach the remaining hostages.

At 0500Z on the 29th the DRAGON ROUGE force began its return from Kamina to Belgium, via Ascension and Las Palmas. The force arrived in Brussels on December 1, where the Belgian paratroop commander and the U.S. airlift commander were decorated by the King of the Belgians.

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VII. SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

While every crisis has its special characteristics, the Congo rescue mission was one of the most unusual of all the crises in which the U.S. has become involved in recent years.

DRAGON ROUGE was a combined operation, more Belgian than American. The U.S. provided the vehicle, the Belgians the sword. Cooperation and coordination were outstanding. All told, no less than six nations were involved in the operation, while a score more were on the political fringes of the affair.

The very nature of the mission itself was extraordinary, and evoked traditions of earlier years when the rescue of beleaguered nationals menaced by savages was much more customary. DRAGON ROUGE was unlike the more usual situation wherein the U.S. confronts an aggressor who threatens U.S. interests directly or when the U.S. goes to the assistance of a friendly state under some form of attack. In the Congo the U.S. had no vital national interests, and indeed had assiduously avoided involvement in the Congo, apart from its earlier logistic support of the U.N. forces there and the current extremely limited commitment in support of the GDRC.

Consequently, it is worthy of note that at the request of State, unilateral plans had been prepared and seriously considered, which would have launched U.S. forces into the Congo for the sole purpose of rescuing at most twenty-five Americans or as few as the five Government officials. When the Belgians conveniently expressed a willingness to join a mutual undertaking aimed at a rescue of the hostages and to provide the troops, the onus of using American forces was removed from the U.S. official conscience.

As a military operation, the episode in scale was minor, the American contribution minute. Yet the affair was wrapped in a

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political significance far transcending its military importance. Because of this it involved an unusual amount of deliberation at the top level of U.S. decision making. This was in part due to the fact that this was not a crash operation in the usual fashion; there was a certain amount of time to plan and to decide. Decision came in three steps, spaced out over a seven-day period, and for those seven days the affair absorbed a great part of the time of the senior decision makers in both the Departments of State and Defense. The politically sensitive nature of the operation at the same time imposed an unusually stringent degree of secrecy upon these deliberations and the consequent military moves. Not since the preparations for the Cuba quarantine in October 1962 has a crisis involved such tight security.

Finally, DRAGON ROUGE accomplished its objective. Many more lives were saved than we had a right to expect under the prevailing circumstances. This was accomplished too with a minimum of bloodshed as a result of the military action. The political penalty was expected and has been found to be endurable.

A. OBSERVATIONS ON PLANNING

The Brussels conference was extremely well-handled, the proof of which was the absence of any later misunderstandings between the U.S. and Belgium over the military plan. On the U.S. side, political-military cooperation throughout the conference was exemplary, with the Embassy and the planners closely coordinated.

The planning for the rescue mission was ad hoc and informal, the direct consequence of an informal political understanding. There were no commitments made by the political understanding and none by the planners. The only commitment was to plan. The planning was done without reference to existing U.S. unilateral planning and extreme precautions were taken to avoid any hint of the

[REDACTED]

existence of such plans. While, in retrospect, the failure to include STRICOM planners in the Brussels conference may appear to have been unusual, it may be that the very reason for their exclusion was this desire for tight security.

Because the planning was ad hoc and was undertaken on short notice, instructions to the U.S. military representatives seemed to be geared as much to what not to say as to what to say. In consequence, there were omissions in the instructions. The redeployment of the paratroops back to Belgium was not mentioned and this was left as an issue hanging in air when the first planning conference ended. Furthermore, the American representatives raised the possible use of Wheelus, apparently not having been told that utilization of this base for staging for the operation would be unacceptable to State, no matter what the nationality of the paratroopers. Another consequence of the informality surrounding the initial arrangements was the difference of opinion as to force size. Apparently the U.S. military had received what they took to be firm guidance that a company-size force was to be used, but MacArthur, a participant in the Spaak discussions in Washington, denied any firm commitment had been made. While the Ambassador was able in this case to authorize a change, it is probably best when engaged in interallied planning to have firmer and fully agreed upon guidance for U.S. representatives.

The one major omission in military-political coordination during the planning period lay in the separate and late effort to develop a cover plan. If a cover plan had been developed simultaneously with and as part of the DRAGON ROUGE plan, there could have been time for the sort of elaborate scheme proposed by State and time to have utilized resources such as SACSA offered who were specialists in this sort of work. This omission is difficult to understand in view of the fact that the

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acquisition of overflight rights is a constant problem in political-military cooperation during time of crisis, usually because a military operation is delayed by waiting for the outcome of the diplomatic processes.

While the plan itself was an excellent vehicle, the operation predicated upon it was to be carried out with minimum resources. No preparations were made to provide additional forces, leading, as a result, to major concern at the last moment over the adequacy of DRAGON ROUGE. Much was left to luck and assumption, the truly crucial issue of the relationship of VDW to DRAGON ROUGE being left unresolved until it could be avoided no longer. Apparently because of its political sensitivity, this relationship was not discussed or thought through during the Brussels conference.

Intelligence sources available varied from inadequate to nonexistent. There never was positive intelligence as to just where the hostages were being kept. If they had been dispersed, concealed, or guarded in strength, a major struggle could have developed in Stanleyville. As it turned out, the single drop zone selected for the assault jump was fortunately the closest of all available drop zones to the concentration of hostages.

Finally, the plan had barely been written before one of the basic assumptions of all the U.S.-Belgian activity was changed. This was the expectation that the rescue would be ordered direct from Belgium to the Congo with only refueling stops. The plan was flexible enough to accommodate to the new circumstances, while the change from a single hop to a step-by-step approach to Stanleyville provided the decision makers with a fine degree of control over the whole operation.

TO: [REDACTED]

B. DECISION MAKING

Like the planning arrangement, the decision-making mechanism as it developed was an ad hoc thing. The sensory nerve of decision extended from Washington through Brussels to Leopoldville and out to VDW. At each step American-Belgian agreement was required, and from Ascension the permission of the GDRC was necessary. The decision to go was made in Washington not merely with the recommendations from the field; it could not have been made in Washington without them. The willingness to accept this mechanism which was created with U.S. agreement, was not merely a reflection of the nature of the situation and of our desire to defer to the Belgians as much as possible, but it was also an indication of flexibility in U.S. decision makers and decision-making processes.

The State/Defense group was merely an ad hoc committee, drawn together to discuss the situation, which became the decision-making body, with the President's giving ultimate approval of the decisions. While Defense was represented by three senior officers, two military and one civilian, the composition of the group reflected the essentially political character of the decision. There were no distinct differences of opinion between the military and the State members, since there were no real problems connected with the U.S. military role in the affair. The earlier differences over the use of Wheelus were ended by the decision to stage the force through a Congo stop.

The decision-making process was a slow, careful and measured one. There was time for deliberation and decision. While the major issues were as obvious on the 15th of November as they were on the 23rd, they were considered and reconsidered for hours at a time during this week-long period.

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The key to the decision-making dilemma was timing. Unlike most recent crises, the U.S. held the initiative and was not reacting except in a special sense. The U.S. and Belgium planned and decided essentially at their own chosen speed. In this sense we controlled timing, but we controlled it only to a certain point. DRAGON ROUGE was launched when we wanted it to go, at our preferred time, when coordination with VDW's arrival was certain. Rebel actions did not compel us to launch the operation earlier at a less advantageous time. However, in another sense the ultimate timing rested upon the actions of the rebels toward the hostages. When the threat they posed to the hostages became critical, we must then respond with DRAGON ROUGE. At that point they controlled time. That they did not begin to kill the hostages earlier was merely for us a matter of good fortune. The complexities of timing in respect to the VDW-DRAGON ROUGE relationship have been discussed at length.

It would appear that during the process of decision making the deep reluctance of some of the political decision makers at State caused them to lose sight of the objective. Their degree of concern over international reactions, especially in regard to the rest of Africa, led them to grasp at any straw, such as the negotiations with the rebels. Admittedly, their dilemma was keen. Not merely were they concerned over the longer range U.S. relationships with Africa, but at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly the next week, the U.S. would need the votes of the African states on the U.N. dues and the admission of Communist China issues. However, the avoidance of harsh international reaction seemed to become an end in itself, overshadowing the original objective. That objective was the rescue of the hostages, and the international reaction the price to be paid. That this was accepted ultimately is proven by the execution of DRAGON ROUGE. [The State

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Department was willing, nevertheless, to bend surprisingly far to avoid taking action, even to the point of disregarding the interests of the GDRC.]

The experience with the follow-on operations was interesting. U.S. decision makers recognized that these could be self-regenerative, raising a problem of when and how to stop. Each succeeding step would become more difficult militarily as the rebels responded to our initial actions by dispersing or killing off the remaining hostages. Simultaneously, each succeeding action would bring a heavier weight of political reaction against us, so that a point of diminishing returns would be very quickly reached. The experience might be a useful test case for a situation wherein the U.S. contemplates a continuing series of low-level offensive acts against a hostile state.

The inclusion of a J-3 action officer responsible for Congo affairs in the decision-making group proved again the value to be derived from the presence of Joint Staff action officers at such high-level decision meetings. Not only are the action officers able to provide detailed information to the senior decision makers, but their presence permits them to transmit information outward from decision meetings to action officer levels at pertinent commands. The tendency to use Joint Staff action officers in such a role during crises is becoming more pronounced and should by all means be encouraged.

C. COMMAND AND CONTROL

There were no serious command problems, despite the fact that there was no single commander for the operation. The U.S. airlift commander and the Belgian troop commander worked in perfect consonance, their duties and respective responsibilities having been thoroughly spelled out in the DRAGON ROUGE plan.

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Initially the absence of a single commander caused some question at both CINCEUR and CINCSTRIKE, but both learned to live with the arrangements.

Since the U.S. military organization within the Congo was controlled by CINCSTRIKE, while the most convenient airlift belonged to CINCEUR, a certain amount of difficulty was bound to occur. However, difficulties were minor, and occurred only at the point of transfer.

A third element in the divided U.S. command organization for the operation was the group of strike aircraft in the Congo.

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Furthermore, the aircraft had other duties and it was a problem to determine whether to weaken air cover over the VDW columns in order to protect the C-130 force. As it was, the strike aircraft were such a negligible entity in the actual operation that no real problem of command and control arose.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DRAGON ROUGE EVENTS
NOVEMBER 1964

TOP SECRET

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DRAGON ROUGE EVENTS
NOVEMBER 1964

NOVEMBER

- 8 Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Paul-Henri Spaak, visits Washington. In a conversation with the UndSecState for Political Affairs he agrees to combined U.S.-Belgian military planning to rescue non-Congolese hostages in Stanleyville. The plan will envisage a Belgian paratroop force to be airlifted to the Congo by U.S. military aircraft. Any decision to execute the operation will be made jointly by both governments, and the agreement to prepare such a plan does not commit either government to implement it.
(Interviews, Emergency Actions (EA) Tapes)
- 10 JCS and EUCOM planners are ordered to Brussels to work with Belgian planners. The JCS is represented by an officer from the European/Middle East Division of J-3. He is instructed not to divulge unilateral U.S. military plans for rescue operations in the Congo to the Belgians. R
(Interviews, EA Tapes)
- 12-13 Brussels planners work out details of the plan (to which the Belgians assign the nickname DRAGON ROUGE). The plan is for the U.S. to employ 12 EUCOM C-130E aircraft to transport a Belgian airborne battalion of approximately 545 troops, 8 jeeps, and 12 motorized tricycles from Belgium to Stanleyville staging through airfields in Spain, the Canary Islands, Ascension Island, and Kamina. Troops will be airdropped at Stanleyville with the initial mission of securing the airfield, following which the motorized equipment will be airlanded. The troops will locate and liberate the hostages and return them to the airfield, from whence the U.S. aircraft will evacuate them to Leopoldville.
- U.S. and Belgian forces remain under their respective national command during the operation. Whenever possible operational decisions will be made by mutual agreement of the U.S. airlift commander and the Belgian paratroop commander, but in general en route decisions are the responsibility of the U.S. airlift commander and assault decisions are the responsibility of the Belgian paratroop commander. The Belgian state that they do not anticipate the possibility of an execution order requiring deployment of the force before 17 November, at about the time the Van der Walle (VDW) force in the Congo is expected to start its march from Bunia toward Stanleyville.
(Interviews; CINCEUR to JCS 142350Z November)

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- 12 Coincidentally, British representatives in Brussels approach the Belgians, expressing their willingness to undertake unilateral U.K. action to rescue the hostages. The Belgians inform the British of the U.S.-Belgian planning in progress and, with U.S. concurrence, invite the British to participate. (Both Belgian and U.S. representatives have in mind the eventual need to obtain British clearance to use the airfield at Ascension.) (State to London 3184, 13 November)
- 13 British representatives in Brussels inform the Belgians that they do not wish to participate in the planning but that they would like to be kept informed. (State to London, 3184, 13 November)
- 14 CINCEUR submits DRAGON ROUGE plan to JCS, as CINCEUR Special Operations Plan 319/64, USEUCOM Assault/Evacuation Support, Congo. On the U.S. side the plan calls for USCINCEUR to furnish the airlift forces and exercise operational control of them in the airlift phase to Kamina, where CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEDIAFSA assumes operational control. CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEDIAFSA supports the operation through the Chief, U.S. Military Mission in the Congo and Commander, Joint Task Force Leopoldville (COMUSJTF LEO), providing current intelligence, emergency spare aircraft, and close air support during the assault phase. (CINCEUR to JCS, 142350Z November)
- 14 Spaak informs U.S. representatives that he is fearful that the reaction time in the plan -- 34 hours from launch in Belgium to the drop at Stanleyville -- is too slow, that immediate action may be required if the rebels initiate reprisals against the hostages during VDW's 4-5 day march on Stanleyville. He proposes revising the plan to provide final pre-staging from Ascension or Kamina at about the time VDW begins his march. The force could be launched from Belgium on 17 November, and then hold at the staging point for a few days, pending the decision to execute. (Brussels to State, 142320Z November)
- 14 The American Embassy in Leopoldville (AmEmbLeo) responds to a State message emphasizing that the U.S. would consider participating in the rescue mission only in the event of "demonstrated imminent peril" to the hostages. The Ambassador states that he does not expect any greater demonstration of peril than there already is; and that once actual killings start it will be too late to save the hostages. He further states that the time required from a U.S. decision until help can reach the hostages is too long, and urges a U.S. decision in principle now so that the force can be lifted to Ascension ASAP, ready to go on short notice. (State to Brussels 989, 13 November; Leo to State 1881, 14 November)

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- 14 U.S. and Belgian representatives in the Congo consult with VDW about the operation. He welcomes the planning, provided the troops are prepositioned at Ascension. He states that if the rebels increase their resistance during his drive on Stanleyville, the airdrop would be most helpful; if they evaporate, he would not require the airdrop at Stanleyville but would welcome a capability to conduct aircrops on 12-hours' notice, to rescue hostages at Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa. He is concerned about the safety of hostages in the latter areas after he takes Stanleyville. R

(Leo to State 1895, 14 November)

VDW states that he expects to reach Lubutu on 22 November, and hopes that his final assault on Stanleyville can begin on 24 November. R

(Leo to State 1895, 14 November)

- 15 Spaak informs the American Ambassador in Brussels (AmEmbBrussels) that he believes the Belgian troops should be transported to Ascension on the 17th and prepositioned there, so that they can go in a matter of hours instead of days. He sees the period of maximum danger to the hostages in Stanleyville starting when VDW begins his attack, and feels that unless the airdrop can be executed on short notice the hostages may be slaughtered while VDW is en route. Spaak says that prepositioning the troops on Ascension would not prejudice a final decision, but would merely be a precaution. He also says he is making clear to VDW that the proposed airdrop is intended as a humanitarian rescue operation, and not an adjunct of VDW's military operations against the rebels.

(Brussels to State 948, 15 November)

- 15 CINCEUR informs AmEmbBrussels that he finds the draft plan for DRAGON ROUGE satisfactory, but asks clarification on whether the operation is to be considered Belgian, U.S., or joint Belgian-U.S.. He also asks which commander is responsible for making the go/no-go decision from Kamina to Stanleyville. He recommends that the Belgian commander be responsible for this.

(USCINCEUR to Brussels, 151835Z)

- 15 JCS directs CINCEUR to be prepared to provide the airlift aircraft to the Belgians on 17 November, in accordance with DRAGON ROUGE, and to prepare a cover plan for the possible deployment of the aircraft to Belgium. However, deployment will not be initiated without further orders from the JCS. (JCS 1894 to USCINCEUR, 152136Z)

- 15 State informs AmEmbBrussels it is inclined to go along with prepositioning the troops at Ascension or other forward location, beginning 17 November, but that before final approval it would like Spaak's assurance that the prepositioning is necessary, considering (a) the risk of detection of the move, R

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prejudicing surprise and increasing the risks to the hostages; (b) the chance that an early leak might precipitate a situation forcing us to implement the plan; (c) the possible advantage of prepositioning the troops at Kamina, rather than Ascension, if the risks of detection are acceptable; or on alert in Belgium, if they are not; and (d) the possible effect of the Stanleyville airdrop on the security of smaller pockets of foreigners in other rebel-held areas.

(State to Brussels 1000, 15 November)

15

AmEmbBrussels states to USCINCEUR that DRAGON ROUGE is conceived as a Belgian operation designed as a humanitarian rescue mission, with the U.S. providing transport, to airlift the troops and evacuate the hostages. He agrees that it is desirable to have a Belgian in command of the actual assault. The understanding is that the decision to undertake the operation will be made jointly by both governments; any pre-assault decision to abort will be by agreement between the U.S. airlift commander (on such factors as weather or condition of aircraft) and the Belgian paratroop commander (on drop conditions); and once the drop occurs, the Belgian commander is in charge of assault and rescue operations. (Brussels to USCINCEUR 953, 14 November)

16

CINCSRIKE/USCINCEAFSA submits his comments on the DRAGON ROUGE plan. He objects to the planned drop procedures and to the absence of positive measures to eliminate possible anti-aircraft weapons prior to the drop. He also states that the planned interval between the drop at the airfield and the first probes into the city is more than ample for the rebels to execute or spirit away the hostages; and he doubts that surprise can be retained on the proposed track, with four en route stops to Kamina and 7 or more hours there prior to the drop. Further, in view of the fact that his command did not participate in the planning, and in view of the requirement for detailed understanding with the Belgians on respective responsibilities, he recommends that USCINCEUR retain operational command of U.S. airlift forces during the entire operation, including the airborne assault phase.

(CINCSRIKE/USCINCEAFSA to JCS, 160206Z)

16

U.S. and Belgian representatives in the Congo report that 17 November is too early to start the deployment from Brussels, in view of the VDW schedule, and that a 20 November starting date would be better. They also state that while it would be best to have the troops at Kamina for military reasons it would be politically more desirable to have them at Ascension. If the troops were on Ascension, however, and an urgent call for the airdrop were made by VDW, it would be necessary to omit the planned Kamina leg and airlift the troops direct from Ascension to Stanleyville.

(Leo to Brussels 1078 and State 1904, 16 November)

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- 16 Belgian officials (Spaak and the Prime Minister) provide their assurances that they believe the prepositioning at Ascension is necessary. They state that a departure date of 17 November will barely put the troops in position to act if fast action is required when the period of maximum peril begins, which they believe will be 19 November; and that if the troops were retained in Belgium, even on alert, it would take two or three days after a decision for them to act. However, they oppose prepositioning the troops at Kamina, because their presence there would lead to "pressures" to commit them to action prematurely. T
- The Belgians also express a need to plan for other rescue operations, at Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa. (Brussels to State 950, 16 November) K
- 16 USCINCEUR comments on DRAGON ROUGE matters, including the prepositioning question. He believes that if the political decision is made to proceed with the operation, deployment on 17 November is prudent. He believes that a direct assault from Ascension without in-Congo staging, as suggested by AmEmbLeo and others, is not feasible, and recommends that all accept the fact that the force must stage at Kamina prior to the assault. He believes that in view of the capabilities of JTF Leo and its relationships with Belgian and Congolese military representatives in the Congo CINCSTRIKE should assume control of the US airlift force at Kamina or Ascension; and recommends that CINCSTRIKE representatives be included in future planning conferences, especially in the case of possible further airdrops at Bunia, Paulis, Watsa, and other locations. (USCINCEUR to JCS 161914Z) -
- 16 The UK Ambassador in Brussels reports that in view of the advanced stage of U.S.-Belgian planning for the rescue operation, the U.K. will not participate as an active partner, but that there is no difficulty about the use of the airfield at Ascension. R
(Brussels to State 951, 16 November)
- 16 The JCS directs execution on 17 November of that portion of DRAGON ROUGE necessary to position the forces on Ascension. No deployment beyond Ascension is authorized except as directed by the JCS. Authority to provide the best current U.S. intelligence on the Stanleyville situation to the airlift and paratroop commanders at Ascension is authorized. (JCS 1903 to CINCEUR, 161923Z)
- 16 The JCS advises CINCEUR that the Belgians are concerned about rescuing the hostages at Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa, and direct him to be prepared on short notice and on the request of AmEmbBrussels to send planners to Brussels to meet with the Belgians. (JCS 1921 to CINCEUR, 162228Z)

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- 16 CINCEUR submits his cover plan for DRAGON ROUGE. The operation envisages the maximum use of darkness during the en route phase, with routing not divulged except as necessary in filing flight plans. If explanations become necessary, the basic story will be that a no-notice strategic mobility exercise, details of which are classified, is in progress. (CINCEUR to JCS 192055Z)
- 16 State sends AmEmbBrussels, as a joint State-Defense message, U.S. proposals for the DRAGON ROUGE cover story. The proposals are for the handling of the Belgian paratroop move and the U.S. Airlift operation as unrelated events; for 6 British transports to fly in and out of Belgium to lay the basis for the story that Belgian paratroops are engaged in a combined training exercise with the British in Europe; that the U.S. C-130s file false flight plans for the U.K. but proceed direct to Spain. (State to Brussels 1014, 16 November) R
- 16 State informs CINCEUR that the Belgian paratroop commander should be responsible for the final go/no-go decision on DRAGON ROUGE from Kamina-on. -Referring to the plan's provision for withdrawal of the C-130s via Wheelus, State asserts that overriding political considerations make this impossible, and the plan should be amended to provide for the withdrawal without overflying any African countries. In addition, it states that the plan contains no provision for the evacuation of the Belgian paratroops from Stanleyville after the operation, and that AmEmbBrussels has been asked to ascertain Belgian intentions in the matter. (State to CINCEUR (Brussels 1017), 16 November) R
- 16 State informs AmEmbBrussels it is sending Mr. Clingerman (former U.S. consul at Stanleyville) to Brussels to consult with the Belgians on specific measures to rescue American hostages. If the Belgians do not object, Clingerman will accompany Belgian forces to but not beyond Kamina, if DRAGON ROUGE is executed. Also, in view of Belgian concern for hostages in areas other than Stanleyville, CINCEUR is being instructed to provide planners to work with the Belgians on other possible rescue operations. R
- State calls the attention of AmEmbBrussels to the fact that DRAGON ROUGE makes no provision for the evacuation of Belgian troops after the mission, and wishes to be advised whether the Belgians have in mind the use of the troops for missions other than the rescue of foreign nationals. State believes it desirable to evacuate the Belgian force ASAP, in order to preserve the most defensible public record that the mission is strictly humanitarian, with no military or political overtones. (State to Brussels 1013, 16 November)

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- 16 State asks AmEmbMadrid to obtain clearance for 12 USAFE C-130 aircraft carrying Belgian paratroops to transit Spain during the night of 17-18 November. (State to Madrid 539, 16 November) R
- 16 State sends a circular cable to AmEmbs in Africa and elsewhere, informing them that the Congo rebels have announced they intend to execute Carlson, the American medical missionary, on false charges of espionage. This is an outrageous violation of international law and accepted standards of humanitarian conduct. The Stanleyville situation is collapsing into anarchy. The world looks to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Congo government to protect innocent civilians in rebel territory. The USG urges all governments to intervene with the rebel authorities to permit the entry of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) into Stanleyville, accompanied by a representative of the OAU Ad Hoc Committee on the Congo, to assure the safety of all foreigners in rebel territory. (State Circular 926, 16 November) R
- 17 The JCS approves the DRAGON ROUGE plan, as CINCEUR Special Operations Plan 319/64. It directs CINCEUR to plan withdrawal of the C-130s after the operation via Ascension, with no use of Wheelus unless specifically authorized. Execution of the plan from Ascension to Kamina will be directed by separate JCS orders, and once execution has been directed by the U.S. and Belgian governments, the final go/no-go decision from Kamina rests with the Belgian assault commander. (JCS 1930 to CINCEUR, 170037Z)
- 17 AmEmbLeo reports Tshombe's feeling that the Stanleyville situation must be settled ASAP, and the only vigorous action such as a paratroop drop could protect both Congolese and non-Congolese civilians there. The AmEmb states that the U.S. Ambassador did not comment (Tshombe has not yet been informed of DRAGON ROUGE planning) but that he was struck by Tshombe's bid for the immediate intervention of friendly powers. (Leo to State 1922, 17 November) R
- 17 AmEmbBrussels reports that the Belgians are not considering using the paratroops for other than the rescue operation, and agree that it is desirable that the C-130s evacuate them from Stanleyville ASAP. However, they would be pleased to have CINCEUR send planners to Brussels ASAP for further planning in connection with the evacuation of foreigners in areas other than Stanleyville. (Brussels to State 960, 17 November) R
- 17 AmEmbBrussels reports Belgian agreement to have Clingerman accompany the troops to Ascension and Kamina. On the proposed DRAGON ROUGE cover story, R

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- the Belgians question whether the U.K. will be able to provide the cover flights of aircraft to Belgian before the scheduled departure of the troops. (Brussels to State 957, 17 November) R
- 17 AmEmbBrussels reports that Spaak believes the proposed cover plan too complicated and likely to cause trouble. On the cover story he prefers more general language to the effect that the troops are participating in a coordinated allied exercise, without reference to the British or other foreigners. (Brussels to State 959, 17 November) R
- 17 CINCEUR reports considerable conflict between his own cover plan and that proposed in the joint State-Defense message to Brussels. Moreover, due to the critical time factor and the number of governments and agencies that would be involved under the joint State-Defense proposal, CINCEUR considers the latter impracticable. (CINCEUR to JCS 171350Z)
- 17 AmEmbBrussels reports the guidelines which the Belgians expect to use in any official statements required if news of DRAGON ROUGE leaks out. The Belgians will make no statements except in response to questions. The Foreign Office will refer questions to the Ministry of Defense; the latter will say that the action is a maneuver within the framework of an interallied exercise, with the destination secret. No reference will be made to the use of American aircraft. (Brussels to State 963, 17 November) R
- 17 JCS directs CINCSTRIKE to send a planner to Brussels ASAP, and CINCEUR to send up to two, to participate with the Belgians in planning further rescue operations. The planners are not to refer to U.S. unilateral plans for the Congo, and are to give no indication the U.S. is planning to or would commit U.S. ground forces in the Congo. (JCS 1944 to CINCSTRIKE and CINCEUR, 171536Z) R
- 17 The JCS directs that until further notice the only U.S. flights authorized to Ascension will be those in support of DRAGON ROUGE. (JCS 1946 to CSAF, 171552Z)
- 17 CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMFA issues his Oplan 319E for DRAGON ROUGE, covering the execution of his responsibilities in support of CINCEUR's 319/64. As CINCSTRIKE's senior in-country representative, COMUSJTF LEO is to assume operational control of the U.S. airlift force at Kamina, which he is to exercise through the CINCEUR airlift force commander. Airlift decisions will be the responsibility of the CINCEUR airlift commander; pre-assault decisions to abort by agreement between the CINCEUR airlift commander and the Belgian paratroop commander; the final go/no-go decision from Kamina by the Belgian

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paratroop commander; and paradrop decisions by the Belgian paratroop commander.
(CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEDIAFS to COMUSJTF LEO 172245Z)

- 17 State informs AmEmbBrussels that the need might arise to execute DRAGON ROUGE before VDW plans to begin his drive on Stanleyville. Without prejudice to the U.S.-Belgian decision to execute DRAGON ROUGE, VDW should be asked to draw up a plan for attacking Stanleyville simultaneously with or immediately following the airdrop, to exploit the situation created by the airdrop.
(State to Brussels 1025, 17 November) R
- 17 The Brussels newspaper, Derniere Heure, carries a report that Belgian paratroops are being sent to Africa in an attempt to rescue 800 whites being held as hostages by Congolese rebels in Stanleyville. The Ministry of Defense, when queried, confirms that a long-distance NATO exercise involving Belgian paratroops was underway; and, without saying where the paratroops were going, denies that their ultimate destination is continental Africa.
(Reuters dispatch from Brussels, November 17)
(Brussels to State 970, 17 November)
- 17 Spaak informs the Belgian Ambassador in Leopoldville that the paratroops will leave Belgium this evening for Ascension. He stresses that Belgian intervention in the Congo can only be justified if the operation is solely humanitarian, not designed to facilitate ANC military operations; and only if the foreign colony is directly imperiled. Spaak's instructions are that in the event of clear danger to the hostages, on the request of VDW, the Belgian Ambassador should consult with the U.S. Ambassador, authorizing him to transmit the code word PUNCH to Ascension. The U.S. Ambassador will refer the matter to the USG, which will then send the go signal via U.S. communications. R
- The Belgian Ambassador should also see Tshombe, inform him that a rescue operation is being contemplated, without telling him of the preparatory measures taken, and ask him for an agreement in writing that a rescue operation for humanitarian ends can be undertaken.
(Brussels to State 967, 17 November) R
- 17 U.S. and Belgian military representatives in the Congo meet with VDW at Kamina. VDW will push on for Stanleyville ASAP. He expects to arrive at Punia on 19 November, take two days to cross the Aluta River via ferry, link up with a second column at Lubutu on 22 November, push on from there toward Stanleyville on 23 or 24 November, and possibly arrive there on the 25th. He recognizes that the DRAGON ROUGE force may start from Brussels on the 17th and may be launched prior to his arrival within striking distance of Stanleyville, and will R

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try to speed up his movement if possible. He believes it desirable to get the DRAGON ROUGE force to Kamina, in quick launch distance from Stanleyville; and recommends that after the Stanleyville airdrop other drops be mounted at Paulis, Watsa, and Bunia.

(Leo to State 1947, 17 November)

- 18 CINCSTRIKE notes that DRAGON ROUGE planning considers two courses of action: a launch from Kamina if operations go according to plan, or a launch from Ascension if an emergency arises. In view of this, and since CINCEUR has stated that it may be desirable to pass operational control of the airlift force to CINCSTRIKE at Ascension rather than Kamina, he recommends that operational control be passed upon closure of the force at Ascension.
(CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMFAFSA to JCS 180041Z)

- 18 CINCEUR states he does not object to passing operational control to CINCSTRIKE at Ascension. He emphasizes that the plan envisages launch of the force from Kamina, and that he believes a launch from Ascension is operationally unsound.
(CINCEUR to JCS 131133Z)

- 18 State informs Brussels that Spaak's instructions to the Belgian Ambassador on the execution decision are not clear. Has Spaak delegated the Belgian government's authority to the Ambassador, and do we look to him for the Belgian 'go' signal?
(State to Brussels 1043, 18 November)

- 18 State asks for Belgian concurrence to political actions to minimize any adverse impact to DRAGON ROUGE. The Belgian Ambassador, assisted by the American Ambassador, should approach Tshombe and/or Kasavubu, describe the proposed operation in general terms, and pre-position with them undated requests to Belgium and the U.S. for assistance in rescuing the hostages; and contingency instructions for the Belgian delegation in the U.N. to transmit explanatory letters to the Secretary General.
(State to Brussels 1044, 18 November)

- 18 AmEmbBrussels informs State that the intent of Spaak's instructions to the Belgian Ambassador is to delegate Belgian authority to him to recommend the execution of DRAGON ROUGE, based on VDW's recommendation. If VDW makes the recommendation and the Belgian Ambassador agrees, the latter will inform the U.S. Ambassador that this is the Belgian recommendation. The U.S. Ambassador then will inform both AmEmbBrussels and the USG, together with his own recommendation. If the USG concurs, the code word will be transmitted to the troops at Ascension via U.S. channels, together with instructions to the U.S. airlift force.
(Brussels to State 986, 13 November)

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- 19 AmEmb Leo reports a problem with the Belgian go/no-go procedures, in that a go-ahead can come only from VDW. The AmEmb and/or BelgEmb may get information from a variety of sources that the hostages are in imminent peril before VDW does; and it is also possible that communications with VDW may break down. In that case he suggests that the AmEmb and BelgEmb jointly make their recommendation to Washington without VDW's concurrence.
(Leo to State 1971, 19 November)
- 19 AmEmb Leo raises the question whether DRAGON ROUGE is to evacuate Stanleyville hostages and then leave whether or not the ANC has taken Stanleyville, or whether it is to evacuate the hostages and then turn Stanleyville over to the ANC. Both AmEmb and BelgEmb Leo feel that Tshombe and Kasavubu will not consent to the operation if the force rescues only foreigners and leaves Stanleyville without protecting the Congolese inhabitants, permitting the rebels to return. The Ambassador strongly recommends that DRAGON ROUGE forces remain in Stanleyville until VDW can effectively occupy the city. R
- 19 State informs AmEmbBrussels that the U.S. cannot question the Belgian decision to delegate authority to the Belgian Ambassador on the activation of DRAGON ROUGE, and that the U.S. is prepared to accept the Ambassador's notification of the code word as constituting the Belgian government's decision. However, the U.S. must continue to reserve the right of final decision in Washington at the highest level.
(State to Brussels 1063, 19 November)
- 19 AmEmbBrussels informs State that the Belgians object to the proposal to preposition letters requesting DRAGON ROUGE with Tshombe and Kasavubu and with the Congolese delegation in the U.N., as too complicated, unnecessary as yet, and possibly leading to difficulties with the Congolese, in that they may begin attaching conditions to the operation that might change the nature of it (e.g., they might wish to assign ANC paratroops to it). R
(Brussels to State 989, 19 November)
- 19 State says it concurs with the Belgian views on prepositioning the letters. R
(State to Brussels 1062, 19 November)
- 19 AmEmbLeo reports a Radio Stanleyville broadcast by Gbenya that the rebels wish to negotiate with the U.S. The Ambassador believes this is a bluff, especially since it has been tied to the threat to execute Carlson on the 23rd, but that he believes it is important for the U.S. not to appear to reject the offer. He asks authority to transmit a message to Gbenye inviting Kanza to contact the American Ambassador wherever he may be. R
(Leo to State 1977, 19 November)

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- 19 AmEmbLeo reports that the BelgEmb has been instructed to approach Tshombe in general terms, but not to press him to sign the documents as yet, in order to keep the process of obtaining Congolese approval as simple as possible. Also, Spaak has categorically turned down any ANC participation in DRAGON ROUGE. The Belgian Ambassador comments that Spaak is "dreaming a little" about the completely humanitarian nature of DRAGON ROUGE and the possibility of keeping it separate from ANC actions; by the time DRAGON ROUGE is completed VDW will have arrived in Stanleyville, or the ANC will have been flown by ANC planes. (Leo to State 1978, 19 November) R
- 19 An Antwerp newspaper reports that 500 Belgian paratroops have left in 12 U.S. aircraft for St. Helena and Ascension. (London to State 2461, 19 November) R
- 19 State directs AmEmbLeo to transmit the following message to Gbenye: We stand ready at any time to discuss the safety of U.S. nationals in Stanleyville. If you name a representative and the place and time, a USG representative is prepared to discuss this at Nairobi or any other capital in East or Central Africa. If you prefer to hold the discussions under OAU auspices, we will await further notification from you or the OAU. (State to Leo 1303, 19 November) R
- 19 State sends AmEmbLeo public affairs guidance for the operation if it is executed. The major emphasis should be on its strictly humanitarian nature, and on minimization of the "visibility" of military aspects of the mission. The operation is undertaken at the specific request of the Congo government; the troops and aircraft will withdraw immediately after rescue of the hostages; there is no ANC participation, and the operation is not designed to engage rebel forces or to seize or hold territory; and U.S. aid is limited to supplying unarmed transports, which the Belgians lack. (State to Leo 1321, 19 November) R
- 19 State informs AmEmbLeo that it assumes VDW will stop at the Alutu crossing or at Lubutu to ask U.S.-Belgian authorization for the final advance on Stanleyville, and that he will not permit other ANC columns to make a separate advance on the city. It also asks AmEmbBrussels about the status of VDW contingency planning in the event of the airdrop and the U.S.-Belgian planning for operations outside Stanleyville. (State to Leo 1310, 19 November; and State to Brussels 1076, 19 November) R
- 19 State sends AmEmbBrussels its tentative rationale and guidelines for negotiations with the rebels. The U.S. objectives are to avoid the accusation in the U.S. and Africa that the U.S. is unwilling to R

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respond to an initiative which could affect the life of a U.S. citizen; and to test whether the rebels are ready to accept the restoration of Congo government authority under terms which make an invasion of Stanleyville unnecessary, enable extraction of the hostages at minimal risk, can be imposed on the Congo government by combined U.S.-Belgian pressures, and help rehabilitate U.S.-OAU relations. The negotiations are not a substitute for present military efforts against the rebels, which should continue, but represent a final effort to secure the safety of the hostages short of a military solution, and to build up an irrefutable record of U.S.-Belgian attempts to obtain a political settlement. The settlement to be offered to the rebels, which the U.S. and Belgians will endeavor to obtain, would include a GDRC guarantee of their safety, political amnesty, no prosecution for political crimes, and freedom to engage in political activity in forthcoming early elections. In addition, the U.S., the Belgians, and possibly the OAU would attempt to arrange some sort of neutral presence (U.S.-Belgian-OAU), possibly including token forces, to see that these undertakings were fulfilled. (State to Brussels 1077, 19 November)

- 20 AmEmbBrussels forwards plans for supplemental rescue operations at Bunia, Paulis, and Watsa, following DRAGON ROUGE. The planners state that it will be 48 hours after the Stanleyville airdrop before other assaults can be mounted; assuming VDW arrives in Stanleyville during this period, the Belgians could mount a maximum of two one-company assault missions. All would be at 0400Z (daylight) to optimize surprise. Additional parachutes and jeeps would be required. The assaults contemplated are at Bunia (DRAGON BLANC), Paulis (DRAGON NOIR), and Watsa (DRAGON VERT). (Brussels to CINCSTRIKE 200845Z)
- 20 VDW reaches the Aluta ferry crossing, after encountering little or no resistance; he expects to take Lubutu today. (USARMA Leo to DIA, 201000Z)
- 20 AmEmbLeo informs State that VDW does not require a contingency plan to speed up his column if DRAGON ROUGE is implemented, that he plans to push for Stanleyville with all possible speed regardless of DRAGON ROUGE. (Leo to State 2002, 20 November)
- 20 JCS directs that operational control of DRAGON ROUGE forces pass to CINCSTRIKE on receipt of the message. (JCS 2100 to CINCSTRIKE 201358Z)
- 20 AmEmbBrussels reports negative Belgian reactions to the proposal to negotiate with the rebels. The Belgians point out that an all-out effort has already been made to bring the rebels into negotiations, and

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has failed; another attempt now would not help the hostages. Moreover, the deal proposed would not be accepted by the GDRC, since it would be at their expense and would equate it with the rebels. A military move on Stanleyville cannot be averted because the GDRC has the capability to push on whether we like it or not. And we should not support the idea that innocent foreign residents of a country can be used internationally to extract political concessions from a sovereign government. The Belgians do not wish to be associated with the negotiations.

(Brussels to State 1002, 20 November)

20 CINCEUR informs the JCS of the timing requirements for a decision on DRAGON ROUGE, assuming the agreed drop time of 0400Z, and assuming departure from Ascension. The execution order must be received at Ascension no later than 0230Z on D-1, so that troops can be awakened and begin processing for an 0630Z take-off from there.
(CINCEUR to JCS 201335Z)

20 AmEmbLeo reports that VDW has no instructions to stop at the Aluta ferry or Lubutu for a further "go" signal before proceeding to Stanleyville; he has already been given the "go" signal for Stanleyville. Both the U.S. and Belgian Ambassadors believe it would be an error to ask VDW to stop now, because the safety of the hostages depends on keeping pressure on the rebels. Furthermore, the GDRC would not agree to a pause, especially since it would be interpreted as a cover-up for U.S. negotiations with the rebels.
(Leo to State 2001, 20 November)

20 AmEmbLeo asks permission for U.S. communications personnel to accompany the VDW column to ensure reliable information about the attack situation.
(Leo to State 2003, 20 November)

20 The rebels in Stanleyville transmit a message allegedly from the U.S. consul there, confirming that Carlson has been condemned to death and that all Americans are in danger; unless there are negotiations with the rebels the elimination of all Americans is likely. The rebels also transmit a second message from Gbenye to the effect that his representative Thomas Kanza, together with President Kenyatta and the Secretary-General of the OAU, are prepared to carry out negotiations on the "prisoners of war" in Nairobi, Kenya.
(Leo to State 2004, 20 November)

20 AmEmbBrussels reports that Spaak would not object to U.S. negotiations with Kanza about the plight of U.S. and other foreign hostages, provided they were not linked to political questions such as a cease-fire. He still feels the negotiations are dangerous, however, and that Kanza will request a cease-fire as a quid pro

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- quo for the evacuation of the hostages, which the GDRC would not accept and which neither the U.S. nor Belgium can guarantee. Spaak also recommends proceeding with DRAGON ROUGE, moving the troops from Ascension to Kamina on the 21st, ready to go into action on the 23rd or 24th.
(Brussels to State 1011, 20 November) R
- 20 AmEmbLeo reports that Tshombe is in a "towering rage" about reports that the U.S. has agreed to negotiate with Gbenye. Tshombe feels the U.S. has no authority to negotiate with Gbenye about the Congo and cannot pressure him into accepting the results.
(Leo to State 2006, 20 November) R
- 20 AmEmbLeo reports that all knowledgeable members of the U.S. Country Team concur in the Belgian views on the negotiations. They are concerned we may fall into a trap, and believe the best course is for VDW to seize Stanleyville ASAP.
(Leo to State 2007, 20 November)
- 20 A joint State-Defense message is issued, providing U.S. guidelines for DRAGON ROUGE. The message reaffirms that the mission is one of evacuation only, after which the force withdraws ASAP; the force is not to remain in Stanleyville to hold it for the GDRC, but should withdraw prior to the arrival of GDRC forces if possible. Aircraft will not airlift any GDRC forces or otherwise assist any GDRC move on Stanleyville.
(State to Brussels 1089, 20 November) R
- 20 The Belgians ask that the paratroop commander at Ascension be alerted for a possible move to Kamina in the near future, because they believe the period of most imminent peril to the hostages has begun.
(Brussels to State 1017, 20 November) R
- 20 The Secretary-General of the OAU asks the U.S. Ambassador in Nairobi to use his influence to have the advance on Stanleyville halted, in the interest of protecting the hostages. He urges negotiations with the rebels to prevent the situation from getting out of hand.
(Nairobi to State 1367, 20 November) R
- 20 AmEmbLeo states that the message from the U.S. consul at Stanleyville makes it clear that the rebels will not negotiate on Carlson and the other Americans except on the basis of a cease-fire and the withdrawal of military aid to Tshombe. The Ambassador is convinced that negotiations with the rebels are against U.S. interests if the price involves the slowdown of the military advance on Stanleyville. He warns that the rebels are only interested in buying time until they can obtain additional outside support.
(Leo to State 2008, 20 November)

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- 20 State refuses the AmEmbLeo request for U.S. communications personnel to accompany VDW. The U.S. does not wish to assume the added political liabilities of associating U.S. forces personnel with VDW. It is suggested that the Belgians provide the communications.
(State to Leo 1334, 20 November)
- 20 In view of strong U.N. reaction to the announcement that Belgian paratroops are at Ascension, State proposes that the U.S. and Belgium ask for a meeting of the Security Council to request a Security Council appeal for the release of the hostages.
(State to Brussels 1099, 20 November)
- 20 AmEmbLeo reports that VDW should be at Lubutu on 22 November, and will probably submit his recommendations on DRAGON ROUGE then. He proposes to start toward Stanleyville on 23 November, march all night, and arrive there at dawn on the 24th. After that it will be several days before he would be prepared to push on to Paulis, Watsa, and Bunia. He recommends that if the DRAGON ROUGE force is not required at Stanleyville that it be employed for these other rescue operations.
(Leo to State 2019, 20 November)
- 20 State sends AmEmb Nairobi new guidelines for the negotiations. The objective is the safety of the civilian population in Stanleyville, including all foreigners, but this cannot be discussed under threats of their execution. We cannot entertain any proposals for cease-fire, which is completely in the hands of the GDRC. However, if Kanza has proposals for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, short of a cease-fire or the removal of foreign military aid, the U.S. is prepared to consider them with the GDRC and Belgium.
(State to Nairobi 1922, 20 November)
- 21 Following a BBC report that U.S. aircraft have flown Belgian paratroop battalion to Ascension, with U.K. concurrence, President Kenyatta asks that a message be sent from him to President Johnson, offering to propose to the rebels that they permit the ICRC and OAU to evacuate the hostages if the U.S. uses its influence with Tshombe to obtain a cease-fire.
(Nairobi to State 1371, 21 November)
- 21 State informs Brussels that the deployment of the DRAGON ROUGE force to Kamina, if not quickly followed by the airdrop at Stanleyville, would cause a loss of surprise and create danger of panic at Stanleyville, outweighing the gain in reaction time. In addition, the rebels might remove the hostages from Stanleyville, complicating the problem of their rescue.
(State to Brussels 1108, 21 November)

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- 21 AmEmb Leo reports an intercept from Radio Stanleyville threatening to devour the prisoners. The Ambassador comments that the crudeness of the threat and primitive French may indicate that Gbenye and other rebel leaders have already left Stanleyville, leaving the city in the hands of the Jeunesse. (Leo to State 2029, 21 November)
- 21 Spaak informs AmEmbBrussels that he does not believe the request for a U.N. Security Council meeting is wise. He feels we would be faced with demands for an immediate cease-fire, just when VDW is moving rapidly and meeting little resistance. He does not believe the GDRC would agree, either. Spaak also recommends that the troops be moved to Kamina today. He is deeply concerned about the hostages, now that it is known the forces are at Ascension, and believes the 24-hour reaction time from Ascension is too long. The risk of disclosure that the forces are at Kamina is less than the risk of being unable to act in time. (Brussels to State 1027, 21 November)
- 21 The U.S. and Belgian Ambassadors recommend that DRAGON ROUGE be executed immediately. They refer to recently intercepted threats to burn the hostages alive and eat them, as indicating that Stanleyville may be in the hands of the most barbaric elements. Rebel knowledge that the troops are at Ascension may increase their panic, and they may massacre the hostages. The lives of the hostages are increasingly in jeopardy unless the operation is conducted ASAP. (Leo to State 2030, 21 November)
- 21 AmEmbLeo reports that the Belgian Ambassador has received signed letters and statements from Tshombe "authorized" rather than "requesting" the Belgians to assist in rescue operations and the U.S. to furnish transport for Belgian forces. (Leo to State 2036, 21 November)
- 21 The JCS directed execution of that portion of DRAGON ROUGE necessary to move the forces to Kamina, to be prepared to execute the assault on Stanleyville at minimum notice. Since the purpose of the move is to be able to react at short notice if word is received that the hostages are being massacred, it is possible that the assault at Stanleyville will be made ASAP rather than at 0400Z as planned. It is also possible that additional operations at Bunia and Paulis will be implemented in lieu of or following the Stanleyville drop. (JCS 2160 to CINCEUR, 211719Z; JCS 2163 to CINCEUR 211838Z)
- 21 Spaak expresses appreciation for the prompt U.S. decision on the movement of DRAGON ROUGE forces to Kamina. He is confident that the presence of the force at Kamina can be kept secret for the time necessary. (Brussels to State 1029, 21 November)

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- 21 State sends a U.S.-Belgian instruction to AmEmbLeo to take whatever direct action necessary to ensure the absolute security of Kamina airfield during DRAGON ROUGE occupancy, using full Belgian military control if necessary.
(State to Leo 1345, 21 November) K
- 21 COMUSJTF LEO reports there may be a 2-3 day delay in VDW's final assault on Stanleyville, because the ferry at the Aluta crossing is inoperable. The situation in Stanleyville is continuing to deteriorate.
(COMUSJTF LEO to CINCSTRIKE 212030Z)
- 21 DRAGON ROUGE aircraft begin departure from Ascension, at 211934Z. CINCSTRIKE reports that estimated time en route is 9:26, and ETA is 220500Z. On departure from Ascension 1 aircraft aborted in air and was recovered at Ascension; its load was transferred to the spare aircraft.
(CINCSTRIKE to JCS 220050Z)
- 21 State queries AmEmbBrussels and AmEmbLeo regarding the move from Kamina on, and asks Belgian views on three alternative courses under consideration:
(a) hold at Kamina pending further orders, (b) if the force can proceed to Stanleyville before night, do so; otherwise move to Stanleyville at the next dawn; (c) wait until the following dawn. TC
- 22 AmEmbBrussels reports the Belgian view that a drop at a time other than that proposed in the DRAGON ROUGE plan would be technically difficult and dangerous.
(Brussels to State 1034, 22 November)
- 22 AmEmbLeo recommends holding the DRAGON ROUGE force at Kamina pending further orders, in the absence of information on further action against the hostages, to effect closer coordination with VDW's operations. The Ambassador believes it would be impracticable for the force to proceed to Stanleyville and consolidate the target before dark, in view of the time required to refuel at Kamina before the drop could be launched. A dawn drop on 23 November also appears premature, unless VDW meets resistance or the hostage situation deteriorates further.
(Leo to State 2038, 22 November)
- 22 The JCS informs CINCSTRIKE that if deterioration in Stanleyville results in a decision to launch the assault before dark on 22 November, he will get the order not later than 220900Z. If he does not receive the order, he is to prepare to execute at 230400Z. Mr. Clinger is authorized to accompany the forces to Stanleyville.
(JCS 2174 to CINCSTRIKE, 220515Z)
- 22 State asks AmEmbBrussels for Belgian views on whether DRAGON ROUGE should proceed at dawn on

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the 23rd or be deferred on the possibility that VDW can arrive at Stanleyville on the 24th. It says the U.S. is inclined to give maximum weight to the Belgian views.
(State to Brussels 1124, 220630Z)

22 DRAGON ROUGE aircraft arrive at Kamina, beginning at 220534Z, with the last one landing at 220950Z. They were on DEFCON 1 at 211745Z.
(CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 221412Z)

22 [AmEmbNairobi reports that Kanza has arrived there and plans to contact Kenyatta ASAP.
(Nairobi to State 1386, 22 November)

22 AmEmbBrussels reports that Spaak believes we should proceed with DRAGON ROUGE on the 23rd as planned, but he is awaiting a report from Leo on an estimate of the situation. He understands VDW encountered difficulties in crossing the river which may delay his arrival in Stanleyville.
(Brussels to State 1037, 22 November)

22 [State asks AmEmb Brussels to inform Spaak (after the decision on DRAGON ROUGE is made) that if unanticipated difficulties arise and further military assistance is necessary, it might be preferable to have it come from France and Britain rather than from the U.S. and Belgium. British and French forces would be the most available, and their use would emphasize the broadly based humanitarian nature of the mission.
(State to Brussels 1133, 22 Nov.)

22 [AmEmb Nairobi informs State that the meeting with Kanza is set for 0800Z 23 November.
(Nairobi to State 391, 22 Nov.)

22 [AmEmb Leo reports that it does not know Clingerman's term of reference, but that it is informing COMUS JTF LEO that Clingerman is the Ambassador's deputy for all non-military matters in Stanleyville, responsible for press statements, political decisions on evacuating the hostages, etc.
(Leo to State 2054, 22 Nov.)

22 [AmEmb Leo sends State the code word "Harold", signifying that it recommends that the DRAGON ROUGE drop be delayed.
(Leo to State 2055, 22 Nov.)

In a subsequent amplifying cable, AmEmb Leo reports the results of a meeting held with VDW and DRAGON ROUGE military leaders. Two courses of action were discussed: (a) a drop on Stanleyville on 23 November, followed by drops on Paulis and Bunia on 25 November; and (b) a drop on Stanleyville on 24 November followed by drops on Paulis and Bunia on 26 November. VDW favors (b) because it would facilitate the link-up with his force. The paratroop

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- commander favors (A) because he feels that delays only complicate the situation. The remaining representatives, including the two Ambassadors, favor (b) for VDW's reasons, and because there has been no evidence of increased danger to the hostages or of security leaks about the presence of the forces at Kamina. (Leo to State 2057, 22 Nov.)
- 22 AmEmb Brussels informs Spaak of the "Harold" message from AmEmb Leo, which corresponds with a similar message he has received from BelgEmb Leo. Spaak says that since both Ambassadors are negative on a 23rd drop, the GOB must be also, since it feels we must rely heavily on the best judgment of our people in the Congo. (Brussels to State 1046, 22 Nov.)
- 22 JCS informs CINCS TRIKE that the final decision to execute DRAGON ROUGE may be made at the last possible moment, and that he should continue to plan and prepare to execute on 230400Z. (JCS to CINCS TRIKE 2180, 221919Z)
- 22 JCS informs CINCS TRIKE that the drop will not be ordered for 230400Z, but that the forces should maintain a two-hour readiness posture. (JCS 2183 to CINCS TRIKE, 222310Z)
- 22 AmEmb Bukavu reports a Radio Stanleyville intercept urging "all brother Lumumbists" to take up their machetes and cut up all foreigners in pieces, if the "Americans" bombard the town. (Bukavu to State 305, 22 Nov.)
- 22 State asks that Gbenye in Stanleyville be informed that the Ambassador in Nairobi is scheduled to meet Kenyatta and Kanza at 0800Z, to discuss the matter of Carlson and other Americans in the Stanleyville area. (State to Bujumbura 329, 22 Nov.)
- 23 State informs AmEmb Leo that the final decision on DRAGON ROUGE has been deferred until 23 November, and asks for the updated recommendations of the Ambassador by 1900Z 23 November. (State to Leo 1380, 230130Z)
- 23 AmEmb Brussels transmits a Belgian report that the New York Times correspondent in Leopoldville has a story that the troops are at Kamina and were dropped on Stanleyville today; the story has an embargo until 1200Z. The Belgian Foreign Office will deny it and expects State to do the same, at least until the decision is reached. (Brussels to State 1047, 23 Nov.)
- 23 AmEmb Brussels reports a discussion with Spaak over the field recommendation for a drop on Stanleyville on 24 November with further drops on the 26th. Spaak

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- is apprehensive because the field recommendations give the impression that the DRAGON ROUGE decision has already been taken and the only question left is to the timing of the operation. As to the timing, he sees the advantage of making the drop on the 24th, at about the time VDW is scheduled to enter Stanleyville, making the capture of Stanleyville easier, but he also sees the disadvantage in that charges will be made that DRAGON ROUGE was used with VDW to capture Stanleyville rather than being a humanitarian operation to save hostages. He is prepared to launch DRAGON ROUGE if necessary to save hostages, but if VDW could liberate the city without unacceptable results to the hostages, it would be politically better than executing the operation. He is asking BelgEmb Leo for a final assessment before making the final decision. R
- 23 AmEmb Leo reports that VDW's progress is such that he is likely to reach Stanleyville not later than mid-morning of the 24th. K
(Leo to State 2062, 23 Nov.)
- 23 AmEmb Nairobi reports on his meeting with Kanza and Kenyatta. Kanza made it clear he had been instructed to discuss a cease-fire and the Congo in general, not just the hostages. Both Kanza and Kenyatta argued for a cease-fire, the departure of the mercenaries, and the withdrawal of U.S. and Belgian support of Tshombe. The U.S. Ambassador said he was not authorized to discuss anything except the hostages, but that he would report the matter to his government. R
(Nairobi to State 1399, 23 Nov.)
- 23 AmEmb Brussels reports that Spaak has queried BelgEmb Leo about a drop on the 24th, in view of the difficulty of explaining DRAGON ROUGE as a humanitarian operation rather than a coordinated ANC-paratroop action to take Stanleyville. Spaak has asked whether VDW believes DRAGON ROUGE is indispensable to assure the security of the hostages, and whether it will be required if he does not encounter more rebel resistance than he has thus far. R
(Brussels to State 1054, 23 Nov.)
- 23 AmEmb Nairobi reports further details of the meeting with Kanza and Kenyatta. Kanza said Carlson was still alive, and that he would ask Gbenye to postpone his execution while the talks were in progress; he also said that rebel messages about burning and devouring the hostages, chopping them up, and the like, were false, and had been planted. He brushed aside references to permitting the ICRC in Stanleyville, and refused to listen to any alternatives to a cease-fire. R
(Nairobi to State 1406, 23 Nov.)
- 23 AmEmb Leo reiterates that in spite of the difficulty of separating VDW's military capture of Stanleyville R

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from DRAGON ROUGE's humanitarian objective, it is important to proceed with DRAGON ROUGE on the 24th. The deployment of the troops to Kamina has increased the risks to the hostages, since word of their presence will get back to the rebels. Moreover, if DRAGON ROUGE is not executed, VDW may take 24 hours to secure the city, during which the rebels may well execute the hostages or take off with them. It should be possible for DRAGON ROUGE forces to make a quick dawn drop, concentrate on rescue operations, and pull back to the airport to avoid joint operations with VDW. Yesterday VDW and the Belgian para-troop commander worked out link-up arrangements, boundaries, and objectives, to avoid mixing ANC and DRAGON ROUGE operations. If DRAGON ROUGE is cancelled and the fighting in Stanleyville is prolonged, with harm to the hostages, the U.S. will have a heavy responsibility for causing increased losses. Further, there will be a strong anti-U.S. and anti-Belgian reaction if, having gone so far as to generate a GDRC request for the operation, and having the GDRC undertake the political risks of allowing DRAGON ROUGE troops come into Kamina, we now back down. (Leo to State 2076, 231655Z)

23 AmEmb Brussels reports to State on further consultations with Spaak, in which, as instructed, the Ambassador put several alternatives before Spaak: a VDW assault on Stanleyville on 23 November without DRAGON ROUGE, a DRAGON ROUGE drop on 24 November with a suspense on VDW's arrival in Stanleyville, and a DRAGON ROUGE drop on 24 November with VDW's arrival in Stanleyville on the same day. Spaak believes it would take too long for VDW to reach the hostages if DRAGON ROUGE is not executed, and this would be too risky; he also believes that VDW cannot be held up, and that he will reach Stanleyville on the 24th whether or not DRAGON ROUGE is implemented; he therefore believes that the hostages will have maximum chances of survival if DRAGON ROUGE is executed on the 24th when VDW reaches Stanleyville. We will have to accept the onus of associating DRAGON ROUGE with ANC operations, since the lives of 1000 men, women, and children are at stake. The Belgian Prime Minister and Defense Minister agree. If the U.S. concurs, the code-word "go" signal, "PUNCH," should be sent at once. (Brussels to State 1057, 23 Nov.)

23 The JCS directs CINCSTRIKE to execute DRAGON ROUGE at 231910Z. D-day H-hour is 240400Z. For the Belgian commander, "PUNCH. U.S. concurs." (JCS 2198 to CINCSTRIKE, 231910Z)

R

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX B
DRAGON ROUGE COMMUNICATIONS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX B

DRAGON ROUGE COMMUNICATIONS

U.S. communications in support of a central African operation were quite limited when a possible rescue mission came under consideration. Such as did exist were controlled by the U.S. Department of State and CINCSTRIKE/USCINCMEDIAFSA (hereafter referred to as CINCSTRIKE). The following is a discussion of the communications (both those in existence before DRAGON ROUGE was conceived and those provided specifically for the DRAGON ROUGE operation) used to support DRAGON ROUGE.

A. COMMUNICATIONS EXISTING BEFORE NOVEMBER 20, 1964

Department of State Communications

The U.S. State Department maintains a complete global telecommunications network of its own, called the Diplomatic Telecommunications System (DTS). That part of the DTS which State used throughout DRAGON ROUGE was operational before DRAGON ROUGE was conceived and is as follows: communications between Leopoldville and the State Department were transmitted via the DTS link from Leopoldville to the DTS Regional Relay Facility at Asmara in Ethiopia, then via another link between Asmara and the major DTS Regional Relay Facility at Nicosia, Cyprus. This major Relay Facility, itself, is linked with another similar major Relay Facility at Clark AFB, in the Philippines; and both of these are linked directly with the State Communications Center at the State Department in Washington, D.C. This system is shown in Figure 1.

In addition to the communications networks so far discussed, the State Department was reported to have at Leopoldville and at Bukavu two KWM-2As (HF SSB radio sets) which the Air Force had provided several months before the DRAGON ROUGE operation when

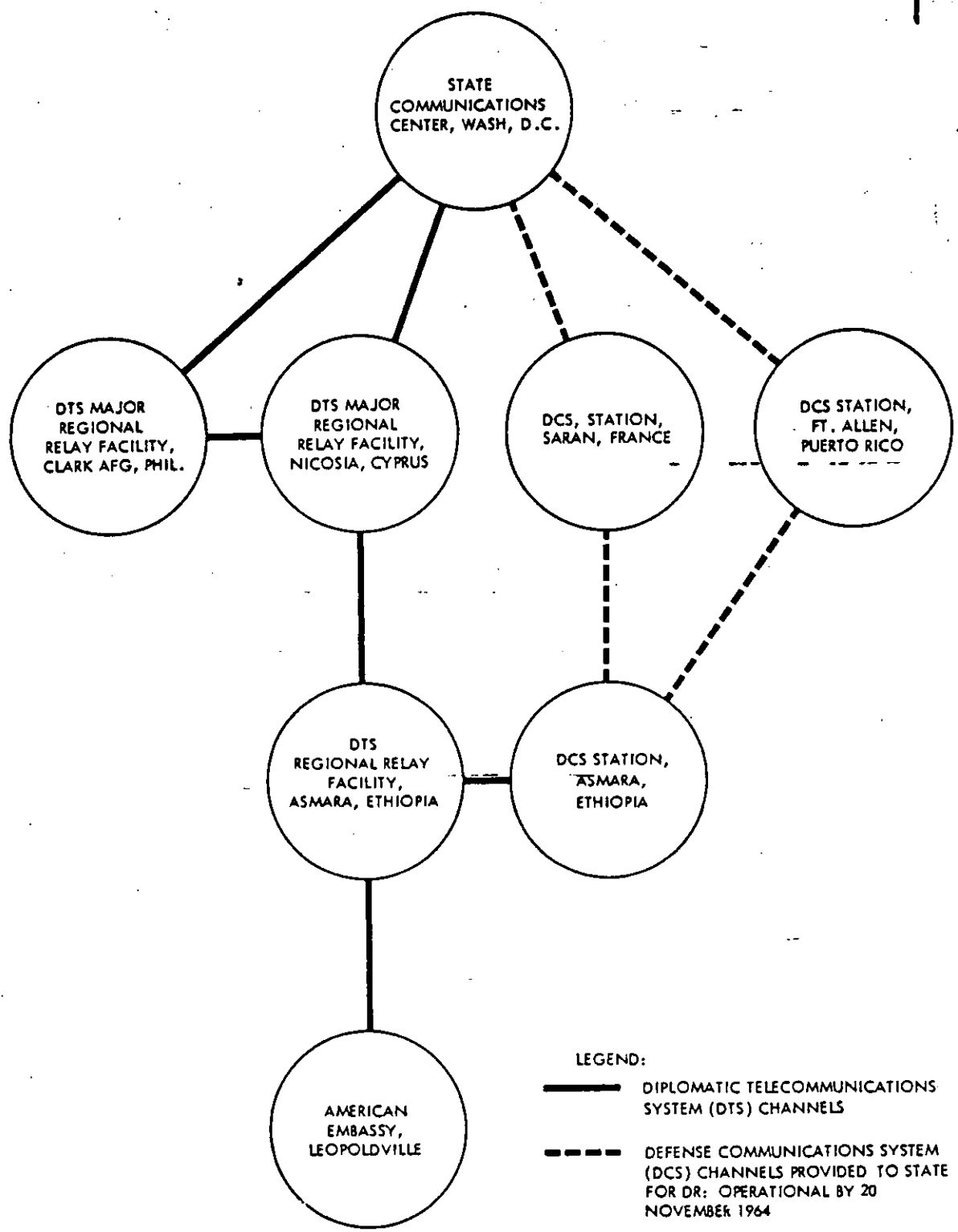


FIGURE 1. U.S. State Department Communication with Leopoldville during the DRAGON ROUGE Operation

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

previous trouble was experienced in the Congo. These sets were used to tie the State Department into USAFE's high-frequency SSB net, commonly referred to as the "Twilight Net."

It should be noted that commercial telephone circuits were operational between Leopoldville and Stanleyville in the Congo, and linking Europe and North America with both these cities. Up to the time of the paradrop at Stanleyville, the situation was considered much too sensitive to pass any communications by way of these open and insecure channels. However, once the drop had occurred, State representatives in the Congo made much use of these commercial long distance telephone channels to pass information (concerning hostages, rescuees, and the developments in Stanleyville) on to the State Department Operations Center: ---

In addition, the State Department requested that DCA establish two DCS circuits for State Department use in following developments affecting the DRAGON ROUGE operation. The first of these (labeled F771 by DCA) was routed from Asmara to the DCS Relay Station at Saran, France, and then to the State Department Operations Center in Washington, D.C. The second circuit (labeled B800), requested as an alternate for F771, was routed from Asmara to the DCS Station at Fort Allen, Puerto Rico, and then to the State Department in Washington, D.C. Both these circuits were operational by 20 November. Although circuit B800 was subject to considerable outage, stemming in part from State personnel's difficulty in operating the terminal equipments, the two DCS circuits were adequate to handle the considerable volume of State traffic which was divided between the DCS and the DTS channels.

Communications Between CINCSRIKE and COMUSJTF Leo

Prior to 20 November, CINCSRIKE communicated with COMUSJTF Leo by both voice and teletype. JTF Leo's primary

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

communications channel for teletype messages was via the State Department link from Leopoldville to Asmara (mentioned above), where the traffic was relayed by means of a Defense Communications System (DCS) common user circuit to CONUS and eventual relay to CINCSTRIKE. This required off-line encryption of information of TOP SECRET classification, and hence was not suitable for speedy transmission of such information. For voice contact, a specified period of three hours was set aside each day to pass traffic on HF SSB radio directly between Leopoldville and CINCSTRIKE; as an alternate route, JTF Leo could pass voice traffic via USAFE's HF "Twilight Net" for relay back to CINCSTRIKE.

JTF Leo had the following equipment before and during the DRAGON ROUGE operation:

- 3 AN/MRC-87 HF SSB sets
- 2 KWM-2A HF SSB sets
- 2 AN/PRC-25 VHF FM portable radios

One AN/MRC-87 was sent to Stanleyville by JTF Leo after the drop.

B. THE DRAGON ROUGE TIME TABLE

To aid in maintaining perspective with regard to the communications used for DRAGON ROUGE, it would be well to bear in mind the approximate operation times involved in the various stages of DRAGON ROUGE which are listed as follows:

<u>Operation</u>	<u>DTG</u>
DRAGON ROUGE lift force started arriving on Ascension at about	181200Z
Operational control of DRAGON ROUGE force passed from CINCEUR to CINCSTRIKE at about	201500Z
DRAGON ROUGE lift force started leaving Ascension for Kamina at	211934Z
DRAGON ROUGE lift force started arriving at Kamina at	220534Z
DRAGON ROUGE force started the launch from Kamina at about	240100Z

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thus, this listing indicates that the DRAGON ROUGE force was on Ascension Island for about eighty hours; for the first fifty hours of this period, the force was under the operational control of CINCEUR.

C. COMMUNICATIONS WITH ASCENSION

As of 18 November, neither CINCEUR nor CINCSTRIKE had communications of their own on Ascension. In conformity with CINCEUR's OPLAN 319/64, a CINCUSAFE TALKING BIRD aircraft was dispatched from Evreux AB, France, at 181415Z (due to arrive at Ascension about 191200Z) which was intended to supply DRAGON ROUGE communications to CINCEUR while the force remained on Ascension and was then to deploy to the Congo along with the force.

CINCSTRIKE, aware that he was slated to be given operational control of the DRAGON ROUGE force, had dispatched three CINCSTRIKE communications support equipment (CSE) packages in three C-130 aircraft for arrival on Ascension at about 200130Z. One of these packages, with a medium-powered transmitter (AN/TSC-15), was used to provide communications for CINCSTRIKE for the duration of the stay of the DRAGON ROUGE force on Ascension. It then was deployed to Kamina with the force where it was used to provide communications with Leopoldville in a circuit referred to as JF-51A. One of the other aircraft contained another such piece of equipment, and the third aircraft a long-range high-powered communications package (AN/TSC-38); both of these latter aircraft proceeded forthwith from Ascension to Leopoldville. In Leopoldville, the higher powered equipment was used to provide communication for CINCSTRIKE in two different circuits: JF-51 to communicate with the AN/TSC-15 at Ascension, and JF-53 to communicate directly with STRICOM at MacDill Air Force Base. The CINCSTRIKE communications link (JF-51) between Leopoldville and Ascension became operational on voice at 201700Z and on secure

[REDACTED]

teletype at 202025Z. With the deployment of the DRAGON ROUGE force to Kamina starting at 211934Z, the JF-51 channel was closed down at 220155Z to enable the communications equipment to be transported to Leopoldville in accord with CINCSTRIKE's plan.

Independently of these arrangements by CINCEUR and CINC-STRIKE, DCA was tasked with establishing other circuits using DCS assets. A circuit was desired between the NMCC and Ascension (labeled B767) via Cape Kennedy. It was activated at 191633Z, but was not able to handle TOP SECRET traffic until 211934Z (it was deactivated on 24 November). On the 20th of November, another circuit was called up by CINCSTRIKE to connect the NMCC with CINC-STRIKE headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base. This circuit (B771) was fully activated on 222049Z November (deactivated on 27 November), and does not seem to have ever been used. A third circuit was called up on 21 November between MacDill and Cape Kennedy in order to link CINCSTRIKE with Ascension (GB22379), presumably via the communications system in use by the Eastern Test Range (formerly known as the Atlantic Missile Range). This circuit was fully operational by 220100Z. All these circuits were to be secure; however, they required specific sets of cards in order to be able to handle TOP SECRET information. There appears to have been considerable confusion over this issue; although there was great effort expended in trying to establish the capability for TS communications, such capability does not appear to have existed much before the DRAGON ROUGE force was ordered to depart for Kamina. This departure for Kamina actually started at about 211934Z. (It should be remembered that operational control of the DRAGON ROUGE force passed from CINCEUR to CINCSTRIKE at about 201500Z.) Thus, there was great difficulty in communicating TOP SECRET information with the DRAGON ROUGE force on Ascension.

D. COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CINCSTRIKE AND THE CONGO

CINCSTRIKE, as the unified commander responsible for the actual U.S. military participation in the execution of DRAGON ROUGE, had the task of providing FLASH precedence reports to all interested echelons of the Military Services and to the State Department on the various phases of the launch of the assault forces, and of following their progress during the several phases of the operation. This responsibility required establishment of an adequate military communications network, linking STRICOM with Leopoldville and Kamina, and with Stanleyville while the DRAGON ROUGE force was deployed there.

Still thinking that some of the airlift activity might involve the air base at Wheelus and in order to have additional communications channels available to him, CINCSTRIKE requested DCA that a circuit (B583) be activated from CINCSTRIKE headquarters at MacDill to Wheelus in Libya. This circuit was reported operational at 182135Z and was routed as follows: from MacDill to Fort Ritchie to Andrews Air Force Base to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to Croughton in England and then to Wheelus Air Base.

Wheelus Air Base in Libya was a main communications hub throughout the events leading up to the implementation of DRAGON ROUGE and for several days following. There was a lack to TOP SECRET-cleared communications personnel at the Wheelus communications facility; at some later time (it is not clear just when), a TOP SECRET-cleared team was flown in from CINCEUR. At 240510Z, STRIKE J-6 requested that DCA establish a circuit to link the DCS Relay Facility at Wheelus with that in Asmara and this was provided.

The communication channel (JF-51A), using AN/TSC-15 equipment package at JTF Leo headquarters (called JTF Leo Main)

[REDACTED]

in Leopoldville and another at JTF Leo ADVON headquarters at Kamina, was established at 220800Z.

Another communications channel (JF-53) was established by using the high-powered communications radio (AN/TSC-38), which CINCSTRIKE had deployed to the Congo, to link COMUSJTF Leo Main at Leopoldville with CINCSTRIKE headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base. This channel became operational at approximately 202300Z. When not used to contact STRIKE headquarters, this equipment was used to communicate with the DCS Relay Facility at Asmara, there to link up with one of the circuits back to CONUS.

CINCSTRIKE J-6 has estimated that 75 percent of the DRAGON ROUGE communications traffic involving STRIKE headquarters and COMUSJTF Leo was transmitted via these networks, which were written into the original HIGH BEAM plan.

The complete military communications net involved in and available for the DRAGON ROUGE operation is illustrated in Figure 2. As shown, TALKING BIRD, moved from Ascension, was stationed at Kamina to provide long-haul communications to Wheelus Air Base and short-haul communications within the Congo. When TALKING BIRD was used to communicate with Wheelus, information was routed onward to CINCSTRIKE from Wheelus via circuit B583 which STRIKE had requested DCA to activate in order to serve as an alternate channel for information to CINCSTRIKE at MacDill Air Force Base.

Communications With the VDW Columns

One of the Congolese Army columns under the command of Colonel Van der Walle had been accompanied by a U.S. Army attache, Lt. Colonel Rattan, as an unofficial U.S. observer. Rattan had a U.S.-supplied HF single-side-band radio which he used periodically to provide communications and appropriate information to

~~TOP SECRET~~

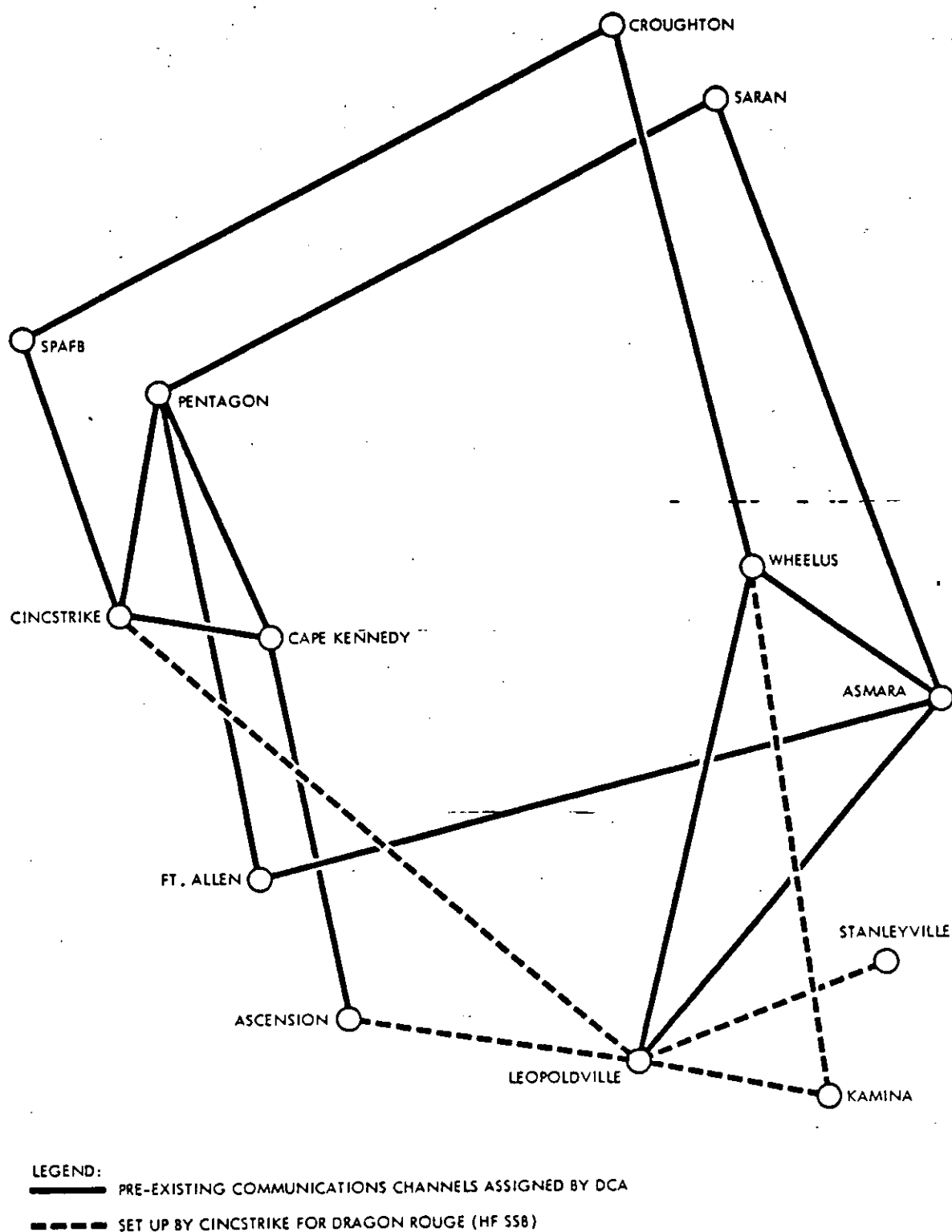


FIGURE 2. Military Communications Channels Provided for DRAGON ROUGE

[REDACTED]

JTF Leo; this SSB radio was monitored 24 hours a day by the American Embassy at Leopoldville (AmEmbLeo). Colonel Rattan became a fully accepted member of the VDW column, so that VDW requested COMUSJTF Leo to assign him formally to the column as the communicator.

For the most part it appears that the progress of this column on its way to Stanleyville was monitored fairly closely from Leopoldville by means of Rattan's radio. However, there are indications that, for the period starting late on 23 November and lasting up through 0930Z on 24 November, at which time the VDW column had entered Stanleyville and had linked up with the DRAGON ROUGE paratroop force there, there had been no radio communication at all received at Leopoldville from the VDW column. In this connection, it should be noted that Ambassador Godley had earlier recommended to DOD and the State Department that Colonel Rattan be assigned U.S. signal personnel to accompany him in the VDW column, along with the appropriate equipment, and that the Department of State vetoed this proposal.

E. COMMUNICATIONS OUTAGES FOR THE PERIOD: 220000Z - 281200Z

The communications outages reported by CINCSRIKE during the DRAGON ROUGE operations are presented in the accompanying Table 1. In summary, the outages appear to be appreciable and significant; however, since such outages were expected to some extent, a large degree of redundancy in communications channels was established as is evidenced by the picture presented in Figure 2 (page 147). This redundancy seems to have sufficed to handle the communications needs adequately; that is, there appears to have been a large element of luck involved in having had the communications networks working properly when called for. For example, ultimate decision to postpone the drop for a 24-hour period was arrived at in Washington on 22 November, some six hours

TABLE I. Military Communications Outages Experienced During the DRAGON Operations
(Reported by CINCSTRIKE)

	JF-51A		JF-53			B583	
	JTF Leo (Leopoldville) to JTF Leo (Kamina)		JTF Leo (Leopoldville) to CINCSTRIKE		JTF Leo (Kamina) to Wheelus	STRICOM to Wheelus	STRICOM to Asmara
	Voice	TTY	Voice	TTY	TTY only	TTY only	TTY only
Operational at	220728Z	220800Z	201930Z	202305Z	231850Z		
Outages for 12-hr. period ending:							
221200Z	-	-	3h 15m	4h 54m	-	-	-
222400Z	1h 10m	1h 30m	-	4h 13m	-	-	-
231200Z	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
232400Z	-	-	1h 10m	4h 53m	50m	1h 42m	2h 4m
241200Z	-	-	3h 10m	7h 41m	-	55m	5h 31m
242400Z	1h	-	3h 15m	8h 15m	8h 2m	3h 35m	2h 15m
251200Z	48m	3h 58m	2h 55m	4h 55m	5h 32m	0	10h 53m
252400Z	52m	2h 35m	37m	3h 4m	0	0	2h 23m
261200Z	23m	2h 37m	2h 42m	4h 15m	5h 19m	0	8h 39m
262400Z	1h 5m	1h 35m	0	1h 55m	34m	0	2h 40m
271200Z	1h 8m	2h 41m	42m	3h 31m	1h 40m	1h 28m	1h 50m
272400Z	58m	1h 26m	45m	3h 39m	1h 15m	25m	1h 5m
281200Z	2h 20m	4h 18m	2h 20m	3h 3m	3h 10m	0	7h 50m

Dashes denote no information.

Zeroes denote no outages.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

before the drop was scheduled to occur on the 23rd. However, communications to the Congo at the moment of decision were not working. Consequently, it might not have been possible to direct the DRAGON ROUGE force to execute within the tight time schedule required, had not the decision to postpone been made for other reasons. Nor would the communications for the operation itself have been available. On the following day, however, all circuits were operational and the communications channels functioned adequately during the various stages of execution. It was reported that the outages were not appreciably greater than have been experienced in other U.S. military operations in 1964.

The outages of the JF-51A HF channel between JTF Leo Main (Leopoldville) and JTF Leo ADVON (Kamina) averaged about one hour for the voice circuits and about 2 to 2½ hours for the teletype circuits for each 12-hour period.

The outages of the JF-53 HF channel between JTF Leo Main and CINCSRIKE appear to have been fairly extensive, averaging upwards of two hours for voice and from 4 to 5 hours for teletype per 12-hour period.

The performance of the HF TTY channel via TALKING BIRD from Kamina to Wheelus was mixed. During three specific 12-hour periods, outages experienced were in excess of five hours and one in excess of eight hours. During the other 12-hour period for which reports are available, outages were considerably smaller and averaged about one hour per 12-hour period.

The performance of DCA circuit B583 from STRICOM to Wheelus (TTY only) seemed to be uniformly good over the entire period for which reports are available. For five out of ten reporting periods, there was no outage at all. The maximum

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

outage was reported to be 3 hours, 35 minutes for a single 12-hour period, this the period following the drop on Stanleyville. The other circuit on which outage figures are available was the teletype circuit between STRICOM and Asmara. Here too the performance was erratic, with extremely high outages per 12-hour period of 8 hours, 8 hours 40 minutes, and 10 hours 50 minutes, and others of 1 hour 5 minutes and 1 hour 50 minutes, with other outages ranging somewhere in between.

F. COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE EXECUTION OF DRAGON ROUGE

[The Department of State did not have any means of direct communication within the Congo that would allow it to follow the progress of various stages of the operation and had to depend on military communications channels for this kind of information.] R

The actual launch was scheduled for 240100Z from Kamina but, because of headwinds, launch execution was initiated 15 minutes early to allow the drop to come off on schedule at 240400Z. At 0140Z information was already available at the NMCC (through CINCSTRIKE communications channels) that the first six aircraft were off on schedule, but that STRIKE communications with the DRAGON ROUGE operations were fading sporadically. By 0156Z the NMCC had the information that aircraft No. 6 had aborted at 0115Z (indicating that it had taken 30 minutes to launch all six), and that No. 7 had been launched in its stead. By 0214Z the NMCC had the information that aircrafts No. 8 thru 12 had gone off at 0145Z. By 0404Z the NMCC was passing on the information that the No. 6 aircraft which had aborted had been turned around on the ground and was again airborne at 0301Z en route to the objective area at Stanleyville. It is to be noted that all the information available to the NMCC so far regarding the actual execution of the launch had come via voice communications through CINCSTRIKE channels and that the news of the events had a time lag ranging

[REDACTED]

from 25 to 40 minutes between the time of occurrence and the time the NMCC received and was relaying the information.

From the records it appears that the actual jump occurred on schedule at about 0400Z, meeting little resistance, that the airfield itself was secured by the paratroop force within the first five minutes, that the paratroop force had to clear the airfield of aviation gas fuel drums and of some wrecked pieces of gear, such as trucks, so that at about 0450Z the first aircraft (No. 7) of those scheduled to be air landed at the Stanleyville airport was able to land there. At 0505Z the DRAGON ROUGE force felt secure enough about the airport that it was able to move on into the city, and at about 0630Z the first of the liberated hostages had arrived at the airport, waiting to be airlifted to Leopoldville.

At 0515Z the word was being passed from the NMCC that the first five aircraft had dropped their paratroops successfully, and that aircraft No. 7, 8 and 9 had landed at the airport.

There is a hiatus at this point on information passed through the military channels into the NMCC, which lasted up to 0654Z. The reasons for this are fairly clear. COMUSJTF Leo had followed the operation up to the point where the Belgian paratroops had secured the airport, had had their heavier supplies air landed, and had proceeded on into Stanleyville. JTF Leo had been enjoined from allowing any U.S. personnel to accompany the drop. The paratroop force had been assigned two air-droppable radios. Colonel Isaacson (COMUSJTF Leo) had accompanied the DRAGON ROUGE force by preceding them in his C-130 weather reconnaissance plane which had gone ahead to reconnoiter the weather and then had joined the force over Stanleyville. It appears that the passage of information at this time was as

[REDACTED]

follows: the Belgian operator of the air-dropped radio equipment transmitted the information up to the aircraft, which then radioed the same information on to the STRIKE communications equipment back at Leopoldville for forwarding on through STRIKE's voice channels to MacDill Air Force Base. When Colonel Isaacson was satisfied that the drop had gone well and that ground operations were proceeding according to plan, he flew with his craft back to Leopoldville from which he made voice contact with CINC-STRIKE and spoke to General Adams. This call was placed at about 0650Z; Isaacson reported that the mission was entirely successful and discussed the armed reconnaissance help and the small arms fire that had been hitting the aircraft. He pointed out that there were no fighting injuries yet and that two Belgian paratroopers had been hurt in the drop and were being brought back to Leopoldville in one of the planes that had landed. In the first JTF Leo SITREP which has a transmission DTG of 240713Z, JTF Leo stated that radio contact with the paratroop commander on the ground had been established at approximately 0425Z, but that due to a language problem he had no information on the situation regarding the hostages as of the time of this SITREP. Following this, the STRIKE channels served mainly as a source of information regarding the disposition of the C-130 craft supplied by CINCEUR for this operation and under the control of CINCSTRIKE.

Mr. Clingerman of the U.S. Department of State landed at Stanleyville with the last of the DRAGON ROUGE craft that was launched for the operation. It was through him that most of the information concerning the refugees and the situation at Stanleyville was obtained.

Earlier information concerning the hostages and their treatment at Stanleyville was transmitted by Ambassador Godley

[REDACTED]

from Leopoldville, as reported by returning evacuees. Thus, at 0705Z, the State Department received a call via commercial telephone lines from Ambassador Godley relaying information which had been radioed back to CINCSRIKE by COMUSJTF Leo reporting that the drop had been successful, two paratroops had been hurt in the drop and that patrols were in Stanleyville. He further reported that as of this time there were already 117 adults and 17 children awaiting evacuation at the Stanleyville airport. At 0745Z, the State Department received another call via commercial telephone lines from Ambassador Godley to report on the latest news from Stanleyville which he had obtained at the Leopoldville airport, concerning the final attempted massacre of hostages which had been interrupted by the arrival of the paratroops on the scene. At 0750Z the State Operations Center received a phone call direct from Mr. Clingerman (in Stanleyville) via commercial channels, reporting more details on the killing of hostages.

At 0801Z when the NMCC had conferenced the Service War Rooms, the ANMCC, and the European DO (duty officer) to relay the content of the 0745Z call from Ambassador Godley in Leopoldville, the CINCEUR DO pointed out that he was getting all of the same information which was coming out of Leopoldville by monitoring the CINCUSAFE "Twilight Net" which was carrying the information relayed to it by the TALKING BIRD. The NMCC indicated that they would appreciate having all such information relayed as soon as possible. It appears that this did enable the NMCC to get some information twice during the ensuing five hours. With this exception, all of the further information concerning the hostages and the situation in Stanleyville seems to have been first relayed out via commercial telephone.

It appears that State Department Operations Center people complained to the NMCC about the lack of information on the

[REDACTED]

DRAGON ROUGE operation. The NMCC DDO (Deputy Director for Operations) knew the COMUSJTF Leo was busy loading and routing aircraft, and making arrangements and plans for the follow-on operation. Nevertheless the DDO called the DO at CINCSRIKE to request a speedup of the information flow. At 240840Z STRIKE called in to the DDO to report on another conversation with Colonel Isaacson, who reported that there were ten aircraft at the Leopoldville airport and three others going to Kamina to prepare for the DRAGON NCIR operation. Colonel Isaacson also stated that they were getting a radio set (AN/MRC-87) ready to airlift to Stanleyville as soon as the situation there appeared fairly secure, since there was no other way to communicate with Stanleyville as yet via military channels. In response to the query as to how Mr. Clingerman was getting through direct to the State Department, Colonel Isaacson pointed out this was probably commercial and that STRIKE had no military communications in Stanleyville which could communicate directly with Leopoldville or any point in the Congo where there was a military communications terminal. Furthermore, STRIKE reminded the NMCC that JTF Leo was enjoined from having people in Stanleyville and that permission had been denied to put people or radios in until it was definitely secured. Also, the initial weather reconnaissance plane, as well as the first five craft containing the paratroops who jumped, did not land at Stanleyville but rather returned directly to Leopoldville. This seems to constitute a clear explanation as to the relative lack of follow-on information once COMUSJTF Leo and his returning aircraft had landed at Leopoldville.

There were other telephone calls between the State Department and the Congo. At 0850Z Mr. Brubeck of the State Department talked to Leopoldville to discover that all five

[REDACTED]

American diplomatic officials were at the airport and in reasonably good condition, but that Dr. Carlson was confirmed dead. At 0850Z there was another such phone call. This time Leopoldville relayed information from Mr. Clingerman at Stanleyville concerning the time of the parachute drop, the time the airfield had been secured, the time the paratroops had left the airfield, the time that the first refugees had arrived at the airport, and that at 0900Z three wounded paratroops had been evacuated to Leopoldville. There was another such call at 1015Z and another at 1215Z.

At 1128Z the CINCEUR duty officer called the NMCC to report information he had heard via the "Twilight Net" by Isaacson which included some details on evacuation, recycling, casualties, etc. It appeared that as late as 1409Z CINCSTRIKE could not determine any reasonably good estimate of the number of hostages that had been evacuated from Stanleyville up to that point.

At 1541Z CINCSTRIKE reported to the DDO that 449 hostages had been evacuated so far and that three C-130s were en route to Stanleyville, one with radio equipment and two others with Belgian medical officers and supplies. During this conversation, STRIKE indicated that they were in direct voice communication with Leopoldville about every 15 or 20 minutes, depending on how good the circuit was. At 1940Z there was a relayed message from the State Operations Center of information obtained in a 1600Z phone call from the Deputy Chief of Mission in Leopoldville, reporting that the paratroops had completed their operations in seeking hostages and withdrawn to the airport in accord with their instructions, that fighting in the city was being handled by VDW, that cleanup of Stanleyville was expected to take

several days, and that the Stanleyville radio station had not yet been recaptured by the VDW forces. At 2234Z, in a call to the NMCC, STRIKE provided a summary on the position of the 14 aircraft available to COMUSJTF Leo. Most of these were at Leopoldville preparing for the DRAGON NOIR operation - only two were at Kamina, the TALKING BIRD aircraft, plus the No. 6 that had aborted earlier. As of 1950Z, 790 hostages had been evacuated. There was some comment that night operations were not feasible at Stanleyville airport, and that the evacuation sorties had to be discontinued overnight due to the lack of suitable lighting there.

G. MESSAGES RECEIVED BY THE NMCC FROM THE CONGO FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH EXECUTION AT 240100Z

Of ten teletype messages received at the NMCC from the Congo regarding DRAGON ROUGE, there were three from JTF Leo (from Kamina) containing launch information, three from COMUSJTF Leo (from Leopoldville), three from AmEmb Leo, and one from Lt. Colonel Rattan. The time from transmission to receipt at the NMCC ranged from six hours (FLASH) to 11 hours (OP IMMEDIATE) for the launch reports, from 5½ to 7 hours for those from COMUSJTF Leo, and from three to 5½ hours for those from AmEmbLeo. These ten appear to be all the pertinent messages in the NMCC message file from the scene of the operation. These transmission times would seem to be unacceptably long; however, all of the information was available much sooner via voice channels. A tabulation of these messages by date-time-group at which they were transmitted along with information as to time of receipt at the NMCC, the originator, the addressee, and some brief summary of content is presented in the accompanying Table 2.

H. NMCC INVOLVEMENT IN DRAGON ROUGE

The NMCC had relatively little responsibility for the DRAGON ROUGE operation. The Vice Director of J-3 (Major General

TABLE II. Time Delay in Message Flow from Congo to NMCC

SENT AT	NMCC RECEIPT	FROM	TO	CONTENT	PRECEDENCE	TIME ENROUTE
240116	241231	JTF Leo Kamina	STRIKE & EUR.	Launch Information	IMMEDIATE	11 hr.
240130	240736	"	"	Launch Information	FLASH	6 hr.
240232	241306	"	"	Launch Information	IMMEDIATE	10½ hr.
240605	241323	JTF Leo	STRIKE	Relay of Information Radioed Ahead by COMUSJTF Leo	FLASH	7 hr.
240606	241305	AmEmb Leo	State	Information on Stanleyville Airport; no word from VDW	FLASH	7 hr.
240713	241249	JTF Leo	State	First SITREP - Some Stanleyville Airport Information	FLASH	5½ hr.
240940	241226	AmEmb Leo	State	Chronology of Operation at Stanleyville Airport	FLASH	3 hr.
241422	242253	Attache Rattan	STRIKE	Stanleyville SITREP	PRIORITY	8½ hr.
241907	250001	AmEmb Leo	State	Stanleyville SITREP 241530Z - Relay from Clingerman via SSB	IMMEDIATE	5 hr.
242245	250420	JTF Leo	STRIKE	SITREP 242000Z	IMMEDIATE	5½ hr.

[REDACTED]

J.B. McPherson) who controlled JCS involvement during the planning stage, chose to use the DDO office in the NMCC as his own operations office for a substantial portion of each day. During the actual drop and the military operations involved, the NMCC followed the proceedings, monitored the operations and acted as a coordinator and supplier of information received (whether through CINCSTRIKE or through State Communications channels) to the White House Situation Room, the Service War Rooms and to other centers in the local Washington area.

[In addition to the normal channels used for communications by the NMCC (including the JCS EA console with its voice circuits, other voice connections through Washington switch, and the normal NMCC message center channels), there were three other avenues of communications available in the NMCC:

a. A direct TTY circuit to the Department of State utilized mainly for retransmission of NMCC incoming information to the Department of State

b. A special secure teletype pony circuit linking the NMCC with the Department of the Army Communications Center (DACC), which had been installed in the NMCC communications area

c. A special TTY circuit to STRICOM which had been installed for the Congo operation as indicated in the circuits mentioned above (labeled B771); however, it seems that this circuit was never used: STRIKE reports reaching the NMCC were those which had been relayed via DACC.

During the operation, there appeared to be little feeling of crisis in the NMCC and only minor augmentation. J-6 had an officer assigned around the clock in the Current Actions

Center, which is not normally the case. In addition the NMCS Support Division assigned an augmentee who was used on the EUR desk. The desk officers (for Africa) from the EUR-ME Division of J-3 were continually represented in the NMCC during the operation.

Most of the NMCC voice communications during the DRAGON ROUGE operation were conducted over insecure lines. This was possible without breaching security since CINCS TRIKE, together with J-6 and J-3 area divisions, had developed a coded index for oral reporting over unclassified networks without compromising the nature of the operation. A listing of the expressions used in this brevity code is given on pages 162 and 163. There was some use of the code in the Washington complex but, with the drop, most of the information was transmitted in the clear without resort to the brevity code. Generally, given the nature of the operation, it is not clear how useful such a code may be.

I. SIGNIFICANT POINTS

Generally satisfactory military communications channels were provided in a timely manner to meet mounting requirements as these emerged in the course of the week-long step-by-step advance to Stanleyville.

In terms of the actual communications channels provided, there was a high degree of redundancy established which resulted in adequacy of communications to meet the needs as they arose, despite substantial outages of some individual circuits. However, had it been necessary to launch the rescue operation sooner, serious command problems might have arisen due to communications outages.

[REDACTED]

Further, reflecting the rapid implementation of the communications channels, during the earlier stages of the operation, TOP SECRET communications facilities were not available to handle the communications traffic as required. This insufficiency was experienced due to the absence of personnel cleared to operate the equipment at the desired level of security and to the unavailability of the cryptographic cards required at some of the communications terminals involved.

There were major delays evidenced in terms of time from transmission of messages from military communications equipment in the Congo to receipt of the messages in the Current Actions Center of the NMCC. While it is true that the information involved was forwarded in timely fashion by voice, nevertheless it is important to improve communications capability in order to reduce time delays in message forwarding to more acceptable values.

The difficulty experienced in getting information regarding developments in Stanleyville after the paradrop and after the lift aircraft had left Stanleyville points up the need for an adequate communications package (i.e., equipment and personnel) to have been placed with the rescue force. In this case, however, the military were not at liberty to provide for this need, due to political considerations.

If the operation had not proceeded as well as it did, there may well have been a need for a secure voice communications capability to be provided between the unified commands and the tactical airlift and combat forces involved.

CINCSTRIKE BREVITY CODE

DUGOUT	FIRST AIRCRAFT LAUNCHED FROM STOP FIVE
GUM DROP	LAST AIRCRAFT LAUNCHED FROM STOP FIVE
BOB SLED	OBJECTIVE AREA WEATHER FAVORABLE
BLUE GARTER	OBJECTIVE AREA WEATHER MARGINAL
HIGH DRIVE	OBJECTIVE AREA WEATHER UNFAVORABLE
CHECKERED FLAG	AIR SUPPORT HAS JOINED
END ZONE	AIR SUPPORT OBJECTIVE
DOUBLE DRIBBLE	AIR SUPPORT NOT EFFECTIVE
FENCE ROW	PERSONNEL SERIAL HAS COMPLETED JUMP
BUCK SHOT	OPERATION IS PROCEEDING
LOW BLOW	AIR LAND SERIAL
STOLEN BASE	SUCCESSFUL
RED SHIRT	UNSUCCESSFUL
SKI JUMP	CIVILIANS-U.S. ONLY
STARTING GATE	CIVILIANS
ANCHOR MAN	CHALK
WATER HOLE	PERSONNEL EVACUATED
TEE OFF	BELGIAN
TIME OUT	CONGOLESE
SHOT GUN	AMERICAN
SIDE LINE	NUMERAL ONE
BROAD JUMP	NUMERAL TWO
SPIT BALL	NUMERAL THREE
WATER BOY	NUMERAL FOUR
FAST LAP	NUMERAL FIVE
TOUCH DOWN	NUMERAL SIX
HIGH HURDLE	NUMERAL SEVEN
QUICK PASS	NUMERAL EIGHT

~~SECRET~~

STEEPLE CHASE	NUMERAL NINE
FIELD GOAL	HEAVY EQUIPMENT SERIAL HAS COMPLETED DROP
KICK OFF	NO RESISTANCE
HOT IRON	LIGHT RESISTANCE AND RIFLE FIRE ONLY
POLE VAULT	AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE
FIRST BASE	ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE
FLY TRAP	NO AIRCRAFT DAMAGE
FOUL BALL	AIRCRAFT DAMAGED AS FOLLOWS
GRID IRON	AIRCRAFT DESTROYED
POP FLY	GOOD
HOME RUN	FAIR
KNOCK OUT	SERIOUS
LINE BACKER	CRITICAL
LONESOME END	LIGHT
QUARTER BACK	MODERATE
SECOND TEAM	HEAVY
DISCUS THROW	NUMERAL TEN
FIELD DOG	KILLED
RED DOG	WOUNDED
PIPE LINE	HOSPITALIZED
BACK STROKE	WEATHER RECCE
NET BALL	AIRFIELD CONDITION
FULL COURT	STANLEYVILLE
JACK KNIFE	CONSUL
OFF TACKLE	KAMINA
SCAT BACK	LEOPOLDVILLE
LIKE NOW	NUMBER ZERO
DRAGON VERT	WATSA
DRAGON NOIR	PAULIS
DRAGON BLANC	BUNIA

~~SECRET~~